MARVEL

EPIC COLLECTION

X-MEN

Andy Kubert
M. PENNINGTON

LEGACIES

LOBDELL • NICIEZA • PETERSON • KUBERT
ROMITA JR. • BACHALO

EPIC COLLECTION

X-MEN

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UNCANNY X-MEN #297-300 & ANNUAL #17, X-MEN #17-23, STRYFE'S STRIKE FILE AND X-MEN UNLIMITED #1

X-MEN

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LEGACIES

UNCANNY X-MEN #297, FEBRUARY 1993
"UP AND AROUND"

STRYFE'S STRIKE FILE, JANUARY 1993

X-MEN #17, FEBRUARY 1993
"A SKINNING OF SOULS, PART ONE: WAITING FOR THE RIPENING"

X-MEN #18, MARCH 1993
"A SKINNING OF SOULS, PART TWO: THE CROPS MATURE"

X-MEN #19, APRIL 1993
"A SKINNING OF SOULS, PART THREE: HARVEST OF THE INNOCENT"

UNCANNY X-MEN #298, MARCH 1993
"...FOR THE CHILDREN!"

UNCANNY X-MEN #299, APRIL 1993
"NIGHTLINES"

UNCANNY X-MEN #300, MAY 1993
"LEGACIES"
"EPILOG"

X-MEN UNLIMITED #1, JUNE 1993
"FOLLOW THE LEADER"

X-MEN #20, MAY 1993
"DIGGING IN THE DIRT"

X-MEN #21, JUNE 1993
"THE PUZZLE BOX"

X-MEN #22, JULY 1993
"THE MASK BEHIND THE FACADE"

X-MEN #23, AUGUST 1993
"LEANING TOWARDS ONESELF"

UNCANNY X-MEN ANNUAL #17, 1993
"THE GIFT GOODBYE"
"OF KINGS AND QUEENS AND PROMISES"

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297
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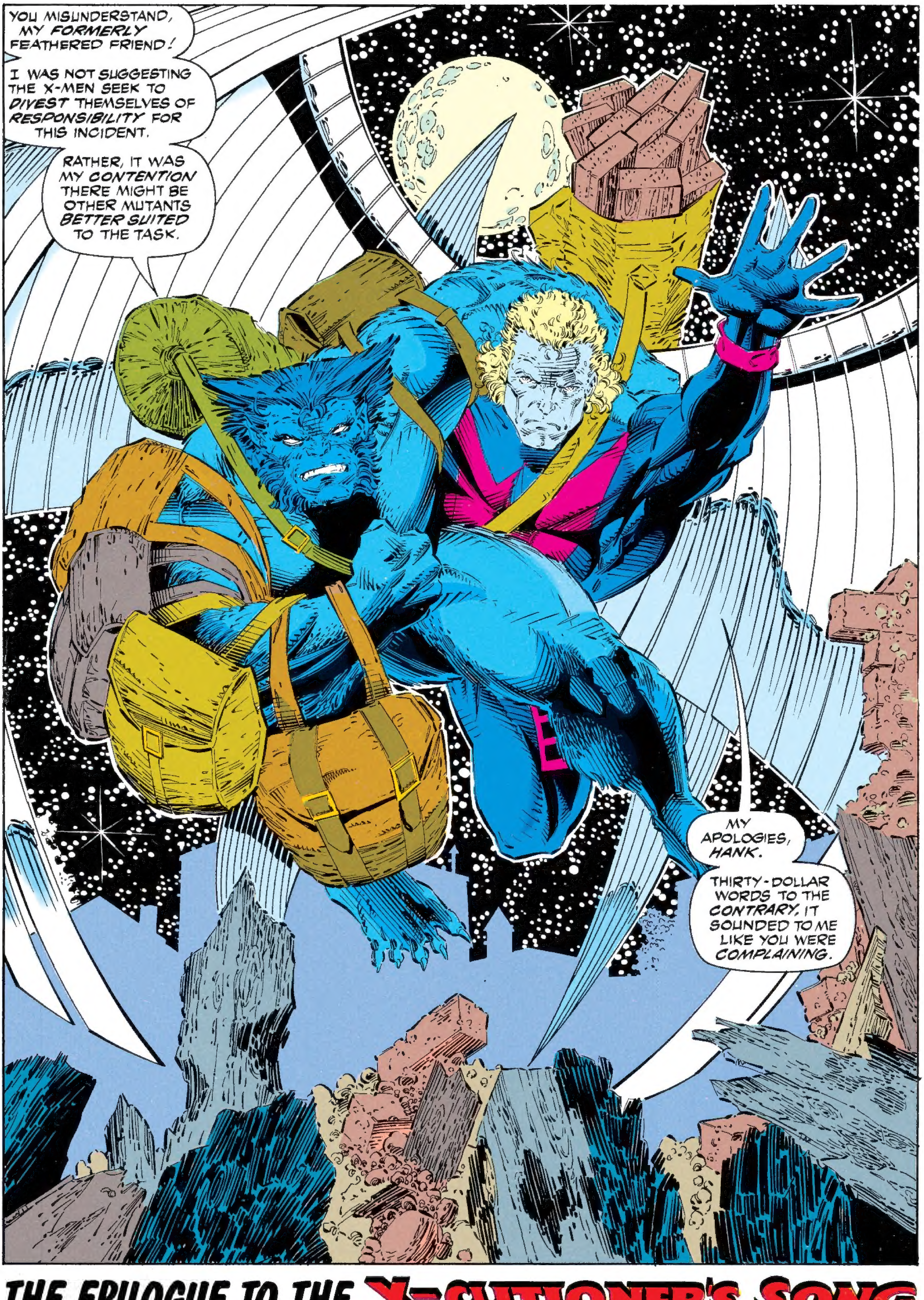
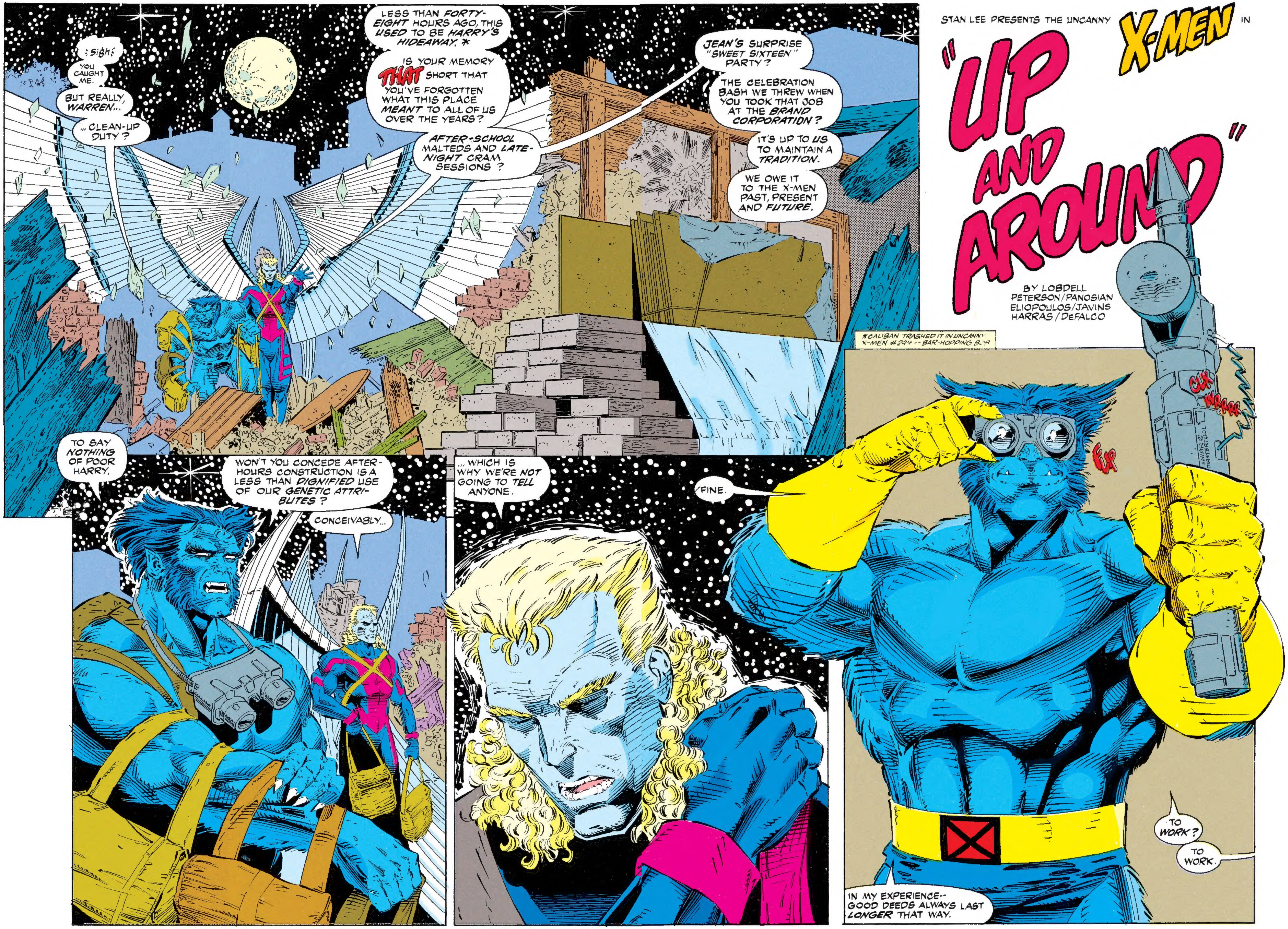
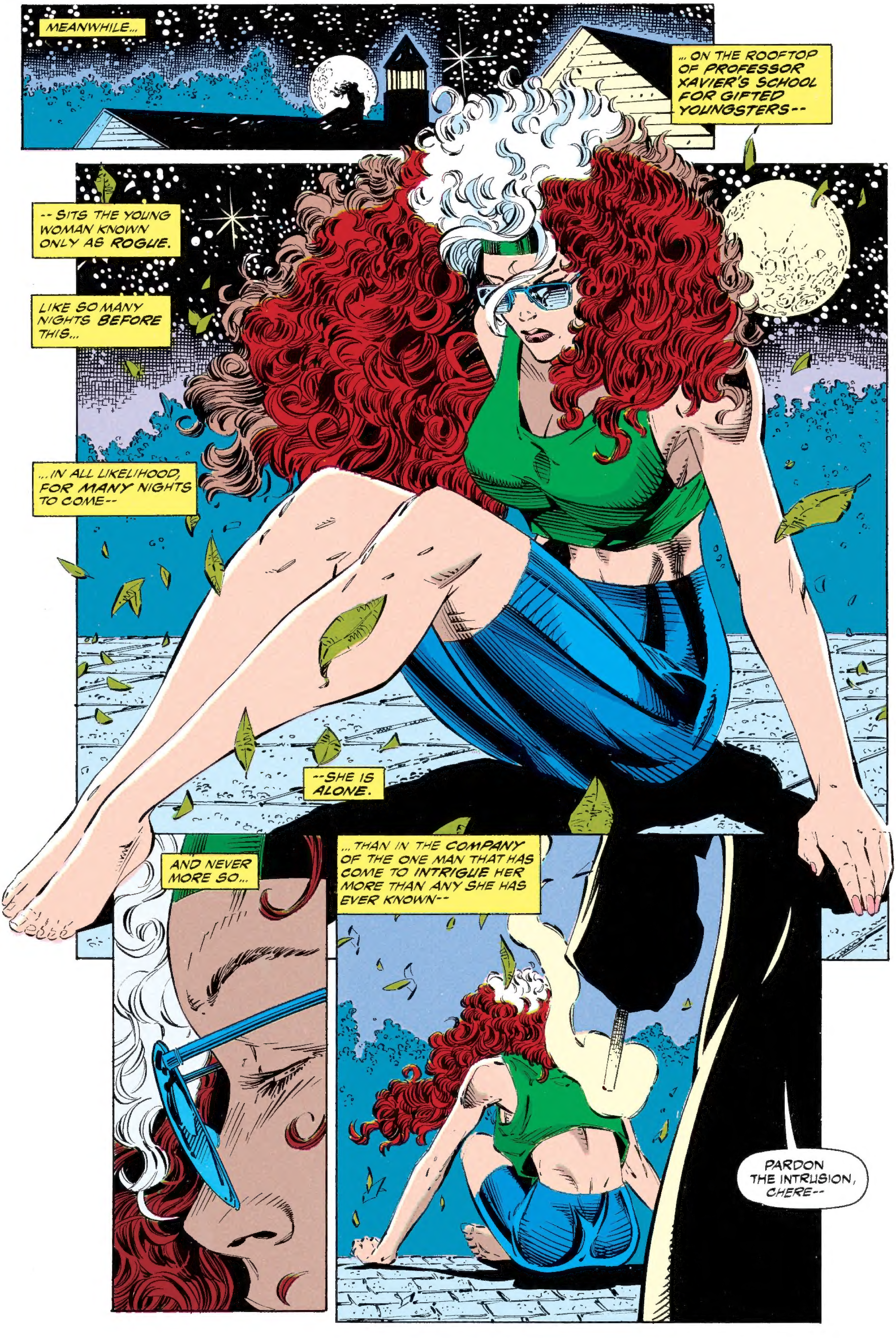
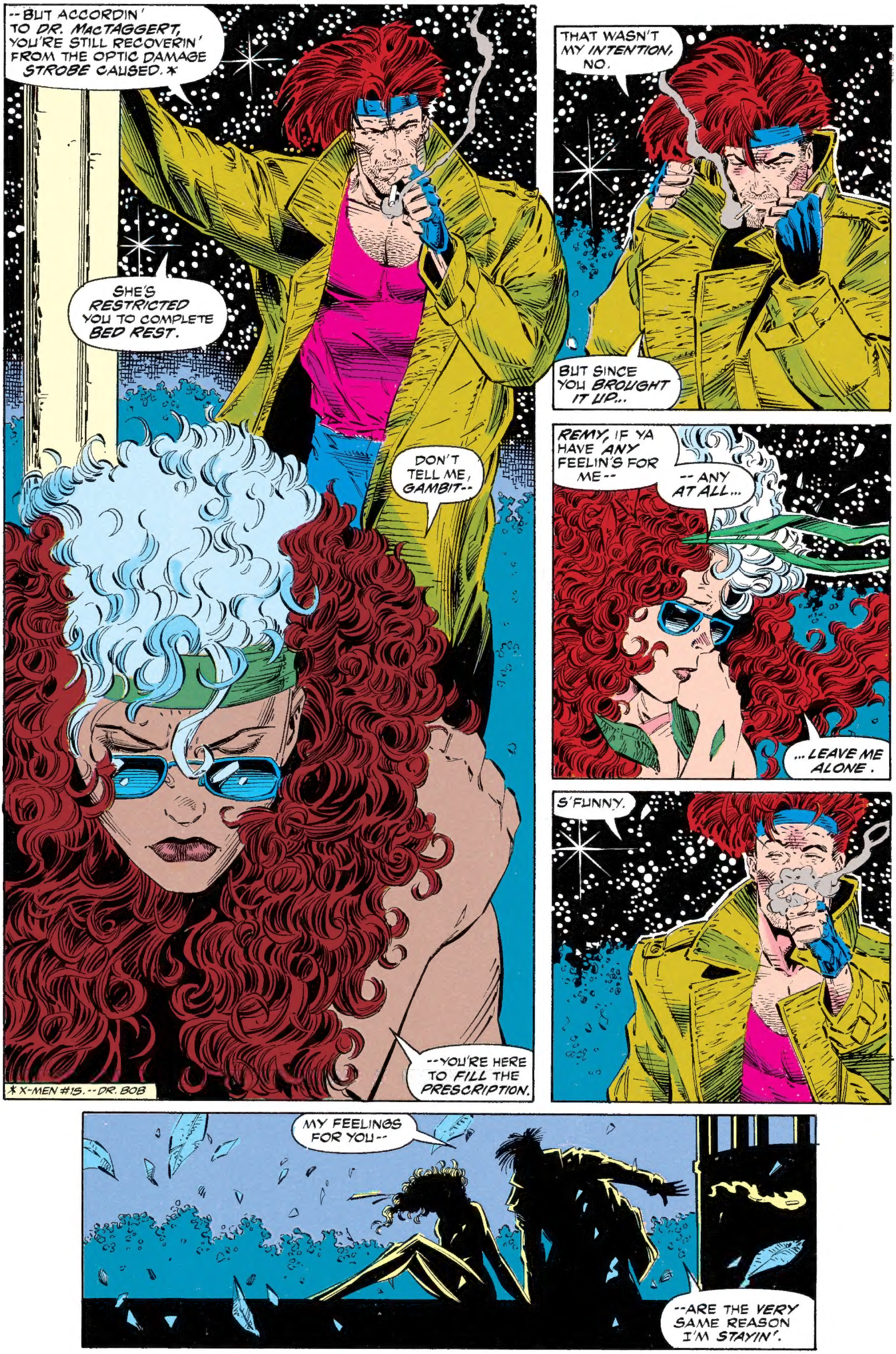
SONG'S END


YOU MISUNDERSTAND, MY *FORMERLY* FEATHERED FRIEND!
I WAS NOT SUGGESTING THE X-MEN SEEK TO *DIVEST* THEMSELVES OF *RESPONSIBILITY* FOR THIS INCIDENT.
RATHER, IT WAS MY *CONTENTION* THERE MIGHT BE OTHER MUTANTS *BETTER SUITED* TO THE TASK.
MY APOLOGIES, *HANK*.
THIRTY-DOLLAR WORDS TO THE *CONTRARY*, IT SOUNDED TO ME LIKE YOU WERE *COMPLAINING*.

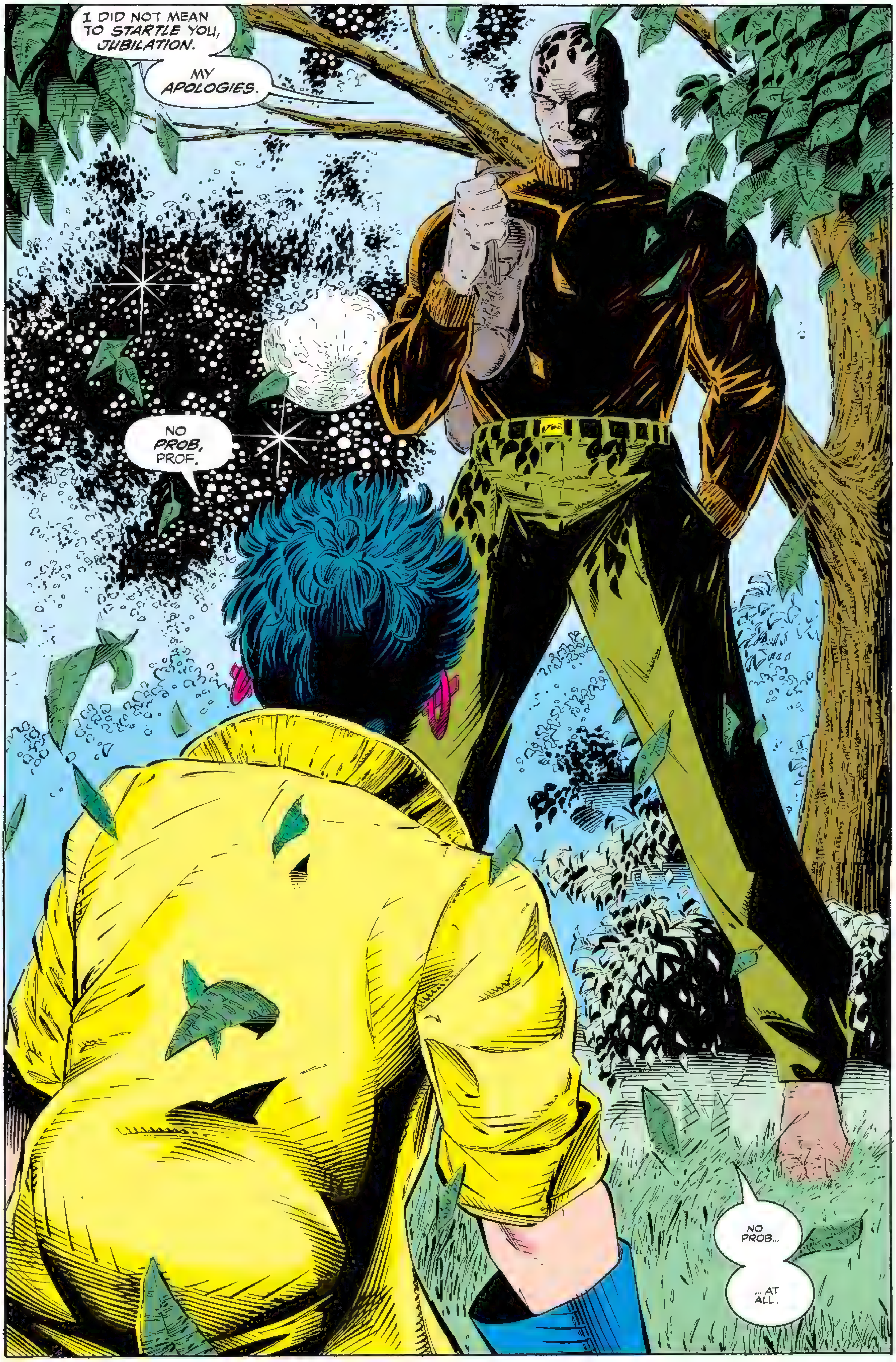
THE EPILOGUE TO THE X-CUTIONER'S SONG

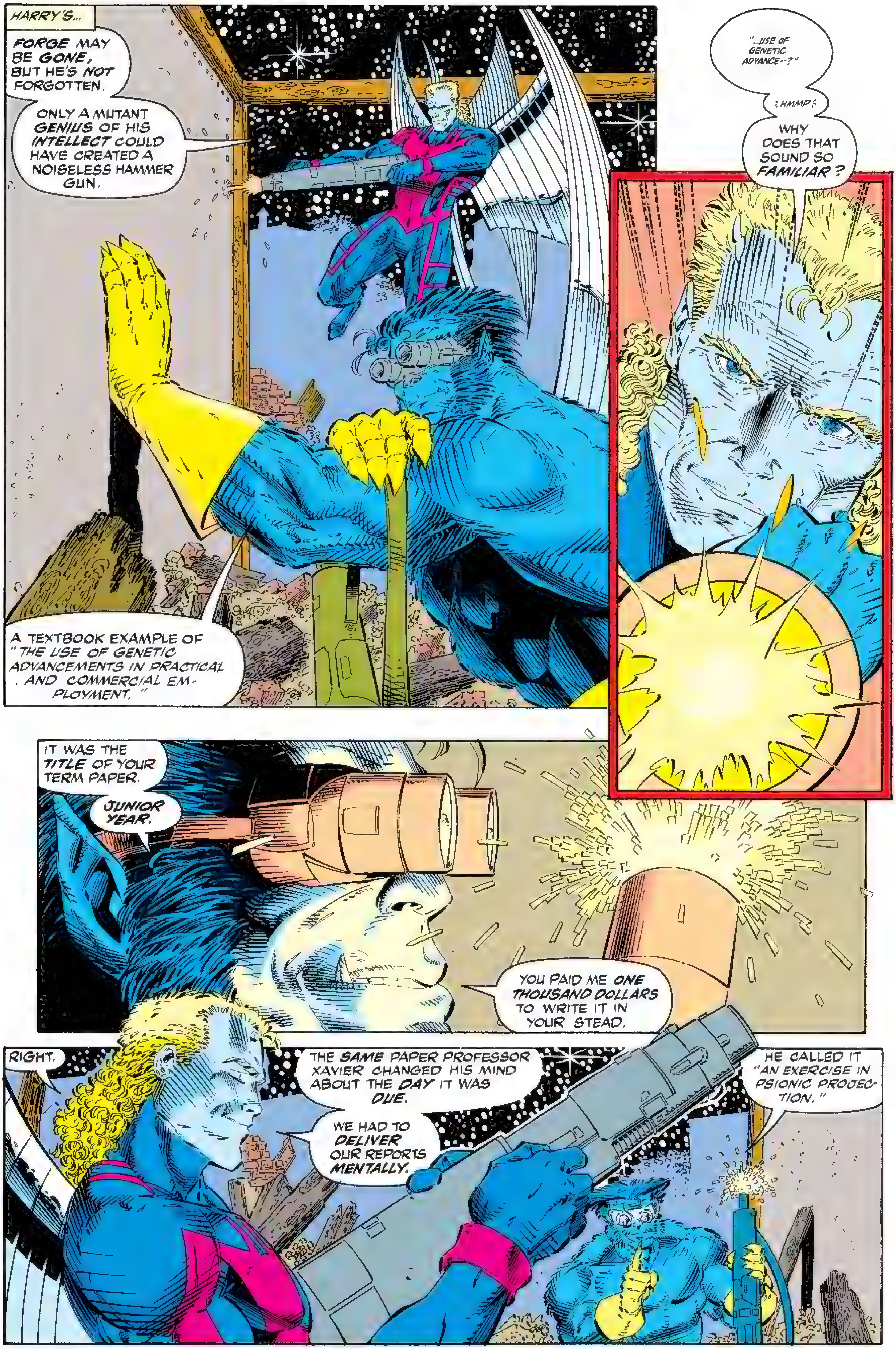

STAN LEE PRESENTS THE UNCANNY X-MEN IN
"UP AND AROUND"
BY LOBDELL
PETERSON/PANOSIAN
ELIOPOULOS/JAVINS
HARRAS/DEFALCO
:sigh:
YOU CAUGHT ME.
BUT REALLY, WARREN...
...CLEAN-UP DUTY?
LESS THAN FORTY-EIGHT HOURS AGO, THIS USED TO BE HARRY'S HIDEAWAY.*
IS YOUR MEMORY THAT SHORT THAT YOU'VE FORGOTTEN WHAT THIS PLACE MEANT TO ALL OF US OVER THE YEARS?
AFTER-SCHOOL MALTEDS AND LATE-NIGHT CRAM SESSIONS?
JEAN'S SURPRISE "SWEET SIXTEEN" PARTY?
THE CELEBRATION BASH WE THREW WHEN YOU TOOK THAT JOB AT THE BRAND CORPORATION?
IT'S UP TO US TO MAINTAIN A TRADITION.
WE OWE IT TO THE X-MEN PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE.
*CALIBAN TRASHED IT IN UNCANNY X-MEN #294 -- BAR-HOPPING BOB
TO SAY NOTHING OF POOR HARRY.
WON'T YOU CONCEDE AFTER-HOURS CONSTRUCTION IS A LESS THAN DIGNIFIED USE OF OUR GENETIC ATTRIBUTES?
CONCEIVABLY...
...WHICH IS WHY WE'RE NOT GOING TO TELL ANYONE.
FINE.
FLIP
CLIK
WRRRR
SHIAR© MASTERTOOL
TO WORK?
TO WORK.
IN MY EXPERIENCE-- GOOD DEEDS ALWAYS LAST LONGER THAT WAY.

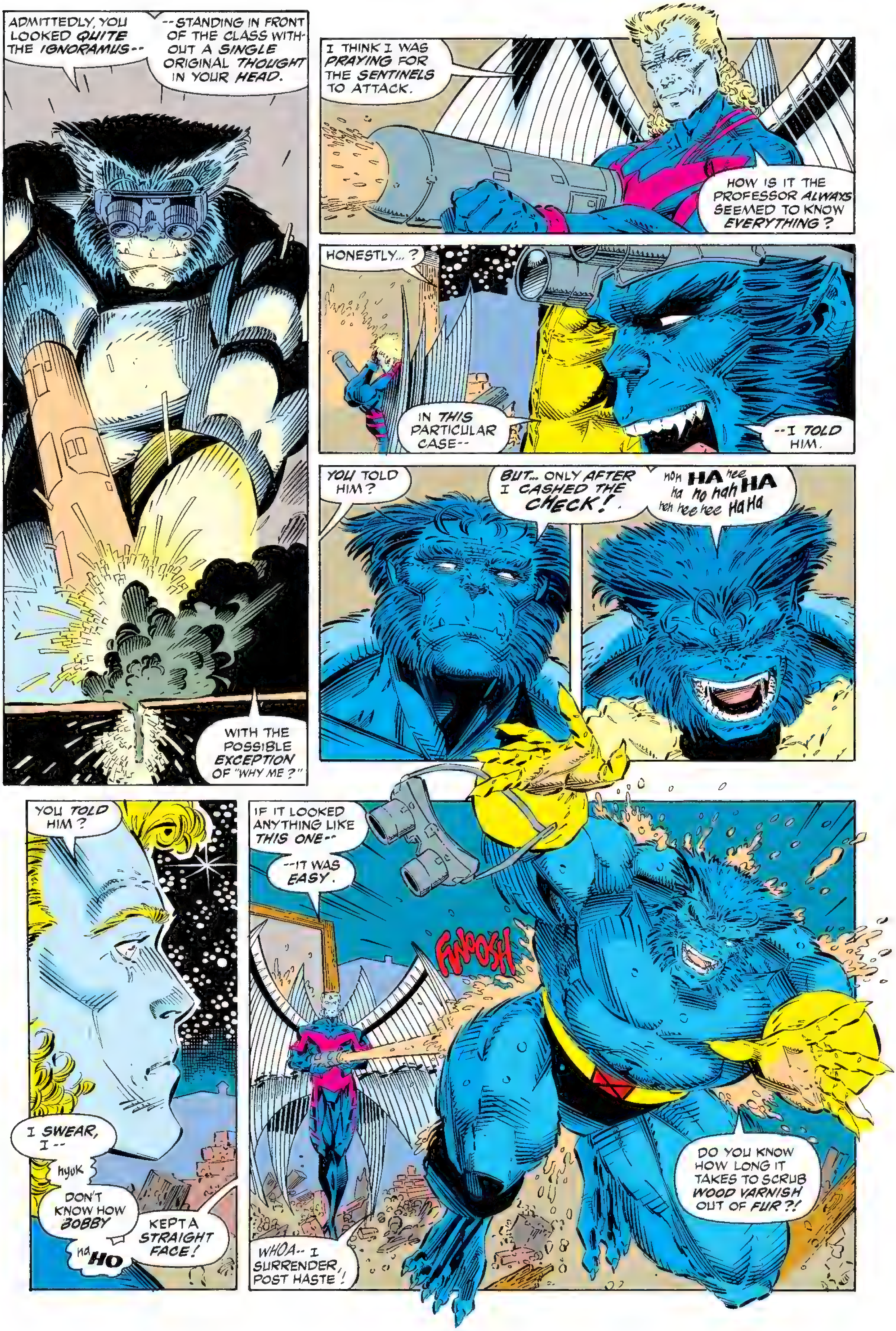

MEANWHILE...
...ON THE ROOFTOP OF PROFESSOR XAVIER'S SCHOOL FOR GIFTED YOUNGSTERS--
--SITS THE YOUNG WOMAN KNOWN ONLY AS ROGUE.
LIKE SO MANY NIGHTS BEFORE THIS...
...IN ALL LIKELIHOOD, FOR MANY NIGHTS TO COME--
--SHE IS ALONE.
AND NEVER MORE SO...
...THAN IN THE COMPANY OF THE ONE MAN THAT HAS COME TO INTRIGUE HER MORE THAN ANY SHE HAS EVER KNOWN--
PARDON THE INTRUSION, CHERE--

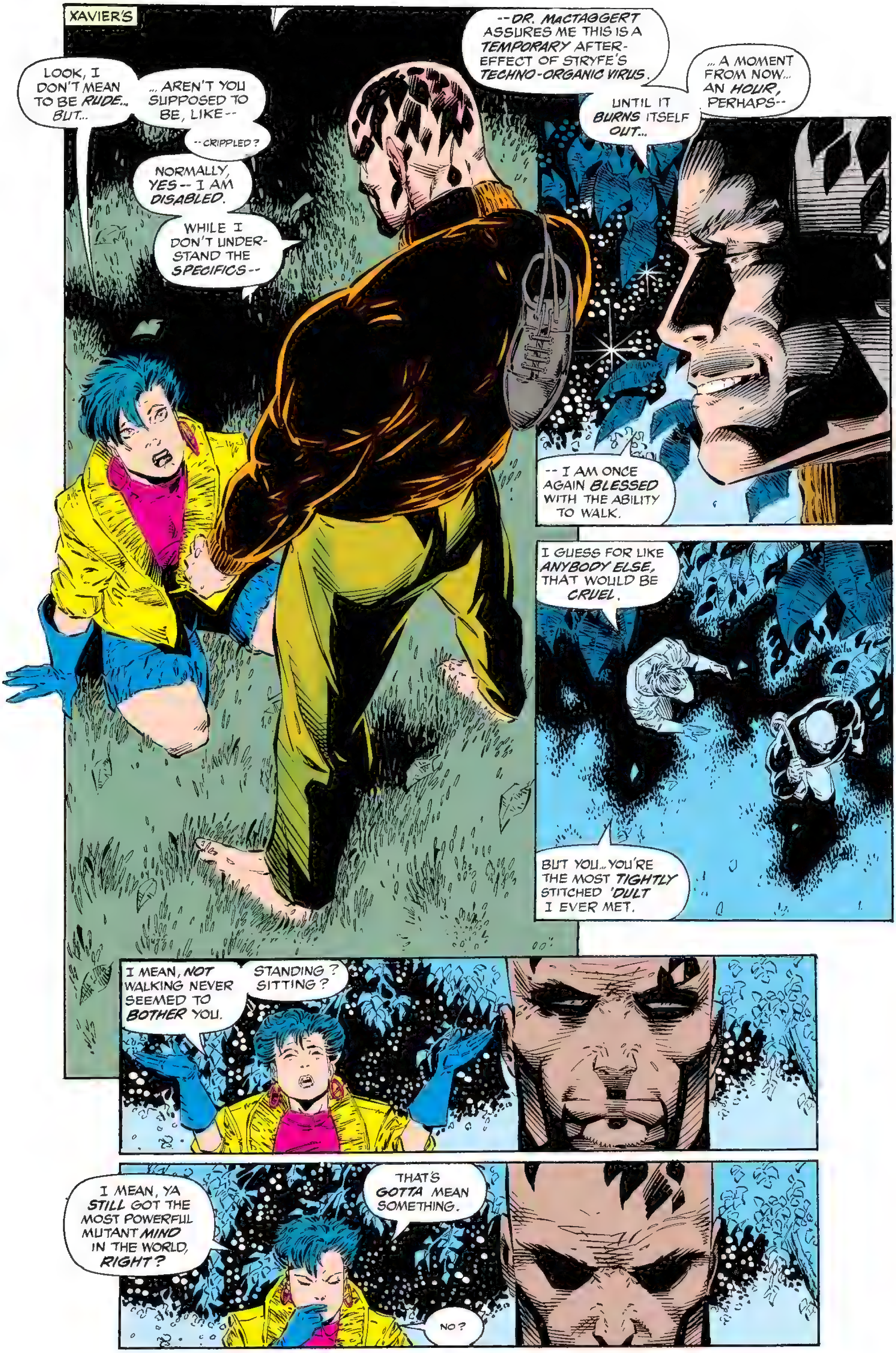

--BUT ACCORDIN' TO *DR. MacTAGGERT*, YOU'RE STILL RECOVERIN' FROM THE OPTIC DAMAGE *STROBE* CAUSED.*
SHE'S *RESTRICTED* YOU TO COMPLETE *BED REST*.
DON'T TELL ME, *GAMBIT*--
--YOU'RE HERE TO *FILL* THE *PRESCRIPTION*.
* X-MEN #15. --DR. BOB
THAT WASN'T MY *INTENTION*, NO.
BUT SINCE YOU *BROUGHT IT UP*...
REMY, IF YA HAVE *ANY* FEELIN'S FOR ME--
--ANY *AT ALL*...
...*LEAVE ME ALONE*.
S'FUNNY.
MY FEELINGS FOR YOU--
--ARE THE *VERY* SAME REASON I'M *STAYIN'*.

ELSEWHERE ON THE SPRAWLING WEST-CHESTER ESTATE...
TOO COOL.
SCOTT AND JEAN ARE FREE--
--PROFESSOR XAVIER IS CURED--
--AND OUR PROBLEMS WITH CABLE AND STRYFE ARE A THING OF THE PAST.
OR FUTURE.
OR WHENEVER.
WONDER WHY THE REST OF THE X-DUDES SPEND SO MUCH TIME MOPING?
FROM HERE, IT'S GOTTA BE THE COOLEST GIG IN THE WORLD.
PERHAPS YOU NEED A BROADER PERSPECTIVE?
WHA--?!
WHO--?!
I THOUGHT I WAS ALONE OUT--
WOUMPH
AS DID I, CHILD.

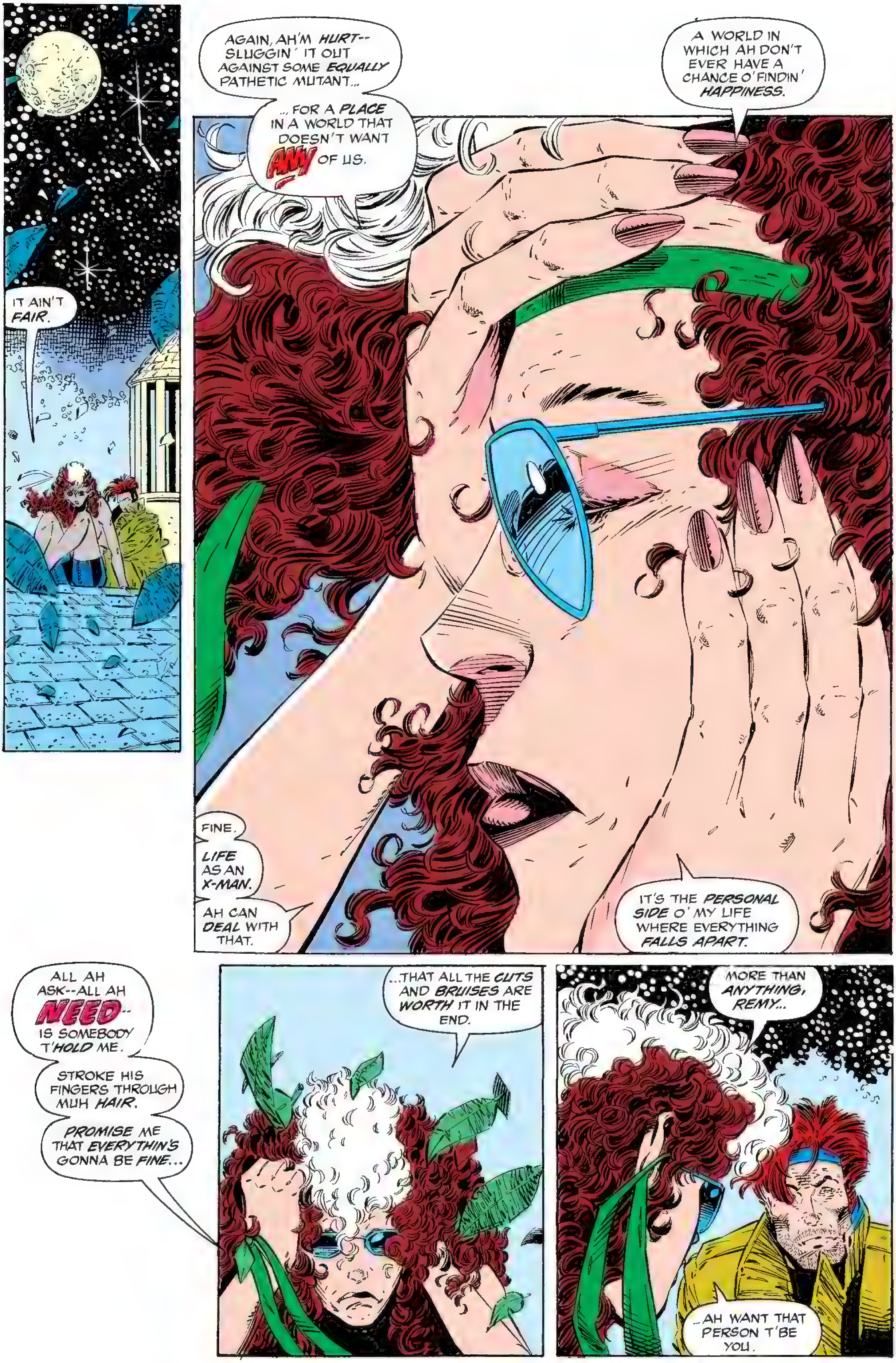

I DID NOT MEAN TO *STARTLE* YOU, *JUBILATION.*
MY *APOLOGIES.*
NO *PROB,* PROF.
NO PROB...
...AT ALL.

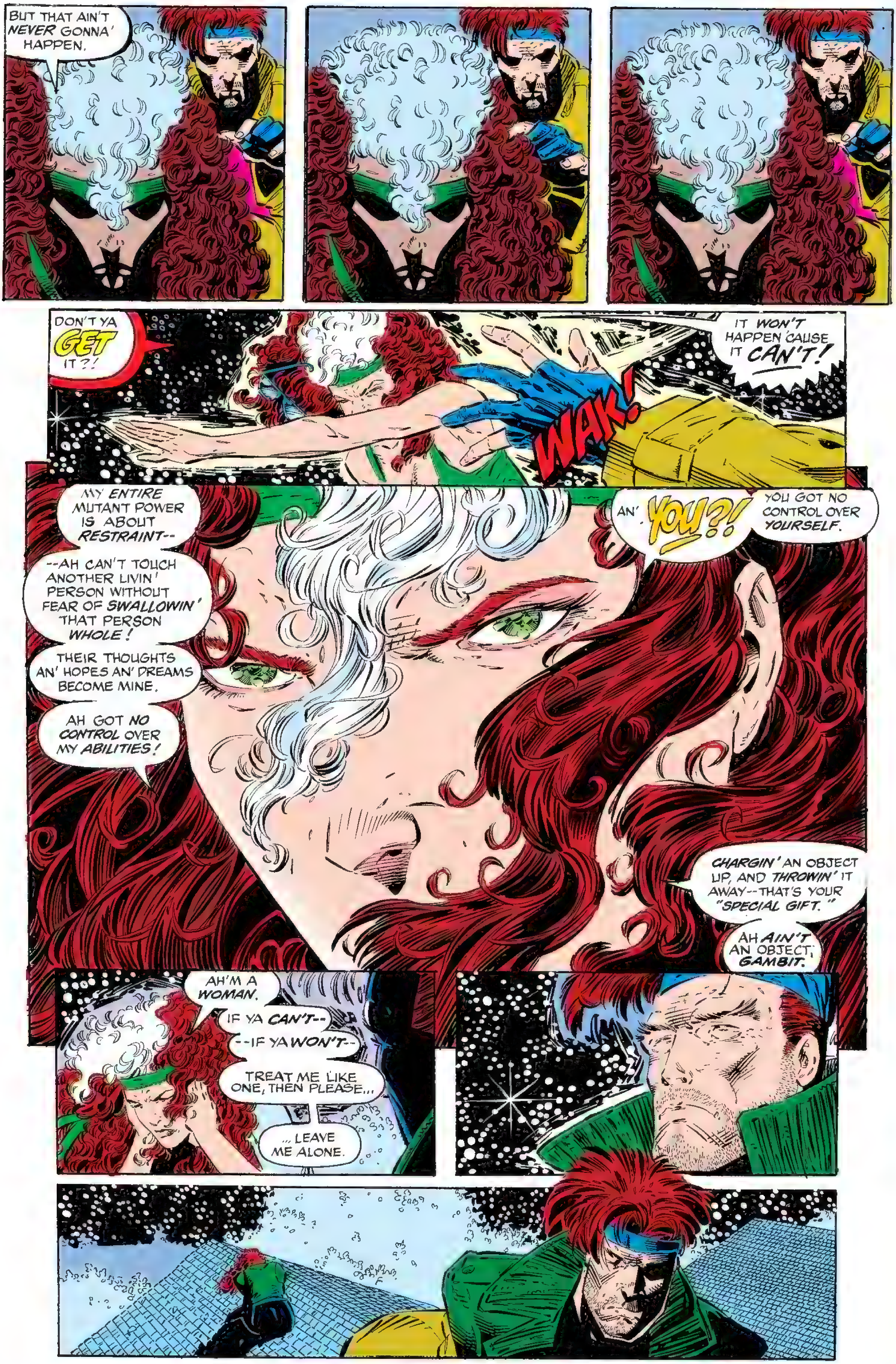

HARRY'S...
FORGE MAY BE GONE, BUT HE'S NOT FORGOTTEN.
ONLY A MUTANT GENIUS OF HIS INTELLECT COULD HAVE CREATED A NOISELESS HAMMER GUN.
A TEXTBOOK EXAMPLE OF "THE USE OF GENETIC ADVANCEMENTS IN PRACTICAL AND COMMERCIAL EMPLOYMENT."
"...USE OF GENETIC ADVANCE--?"
HMMP
WHY DOES THAT SOUND SO FAMILIAR?
IT WAS THE TITLE OF YOUR TERM PAPER.
JUNIOR YEAR.
YOU PAID ME ONE THOUSAND DOLLARS TO WRITE IT IN YOUR STEAD.
RIGHT.
THE SAME PAPER PROFESSOR XAVIER CHANGED HIS MIND ABOUT THE DAY IT WAS DUE.
WE HAD TO DELIVER OUR REPORTS MENTALLY.
HE CALLED IT "AN EXERCISE IN PSIONIC PROJECTION."

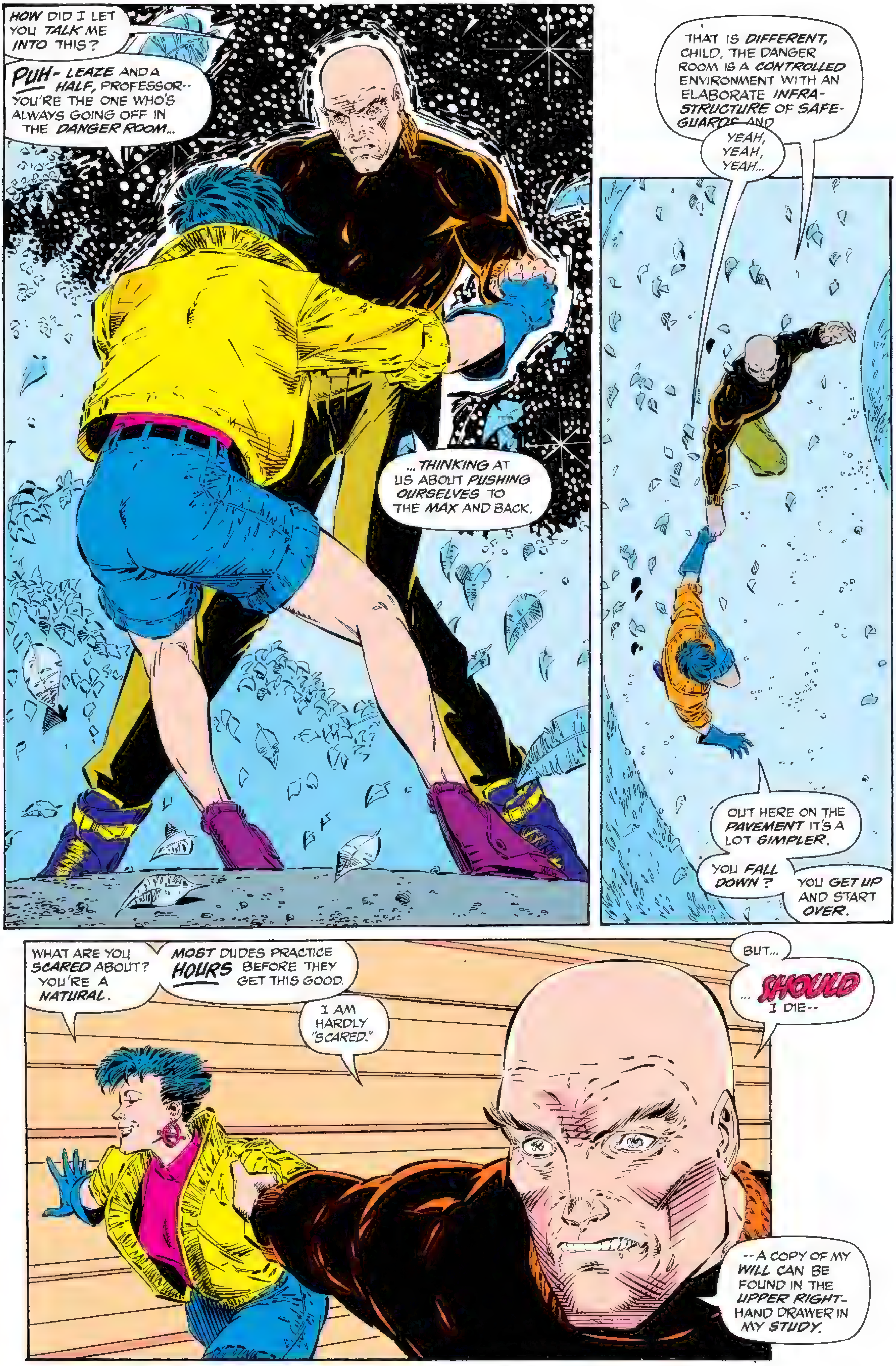

ADMITTEDLY, YOU LOOKED QUITE THE IGNORAMUS--
--STANDING IN FRONT OF THE CLASS WITHOUT A SINGLE ORIGINAL THOUGHT IN YOUR HEAD.
WITH THE POSSIBLE EXCEPTION OF "WHY ME?"
I THINK I WAS PRAYING FOR THE SENTINELS TO ATTACK.
HOW IS IT THE PROFESSOR ALWAYS SEEMED TO KNOW EVERYTHING?
HONESTLY... ?
IN THIS PARTICULAR CASE--
--I TOLD HIM.
YOU TOLD HIM?
BUT... ONLY AFTER I CASHED THE CHECK!
hoh HA hee ha ho hah HA heh hee hee Ha Ha
YOU TOLD HIM?
I SWEAR, I--
hyuk
DON'T KNOW HOW BOBBY
ha HO
KEPT A STRAIGHT FACE!
IF IT LOOKED ANYTHING LIKE THIS ONE--
--IT WAS EASY.
FWOOSH
DO YOU KNOW HOW LONG IT TAKES TO SCRUB WOOD VARNISH OUT OF FUR?!
WHOA-- I SURRENDER, POST HASTE!

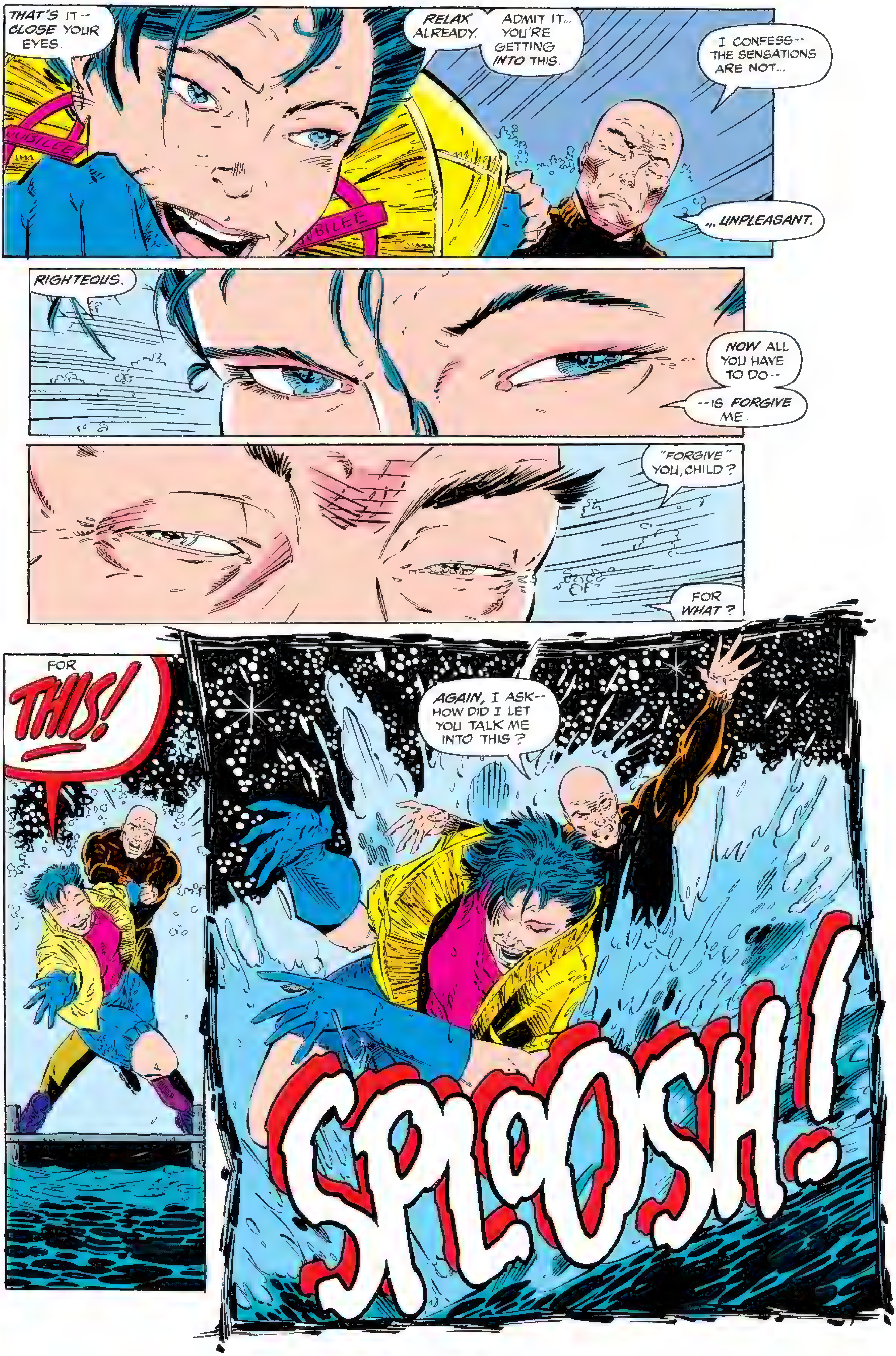

XAVIER'S
LOOK, I DON'T MEAN TO BE *RUDE*.. BUT...
... AREN'T YOU SUPPOSED TO BE, LIKE--
--CRIPPLED?
NORMALLY, *YES*-- I AM *DISABLED*.
WHILE I DON'T UNDERSTAND THE *SPECIFICS*--
--*DR. MacTAGGERT* ASSURES ME THIS IS A *TEMPORARY* AFTER-EFFECT OF STRYFE'S *TECHNO-ORGANIC VIRUS*.
UNTIL IT *BURNS* ITSELF *OUT*...
... A MOMENT FROM NOW... AN *HOUR*, PERHAPS--
-- I AM ONCE AGAIN *BLESSED* WITH THE ABILITY TO WALK.
I GUESS FOR LIKE *ANYBODY ELSE*, THAT WOULD BE *CRUEL*.
BUT YOU... YOU'RE THE MOST *TIGHTLY* STITCHED *'DULT* I EVER MET.
I MEAN, *NOT* WALKING NEVER SEEMED TO *BOTHER* YOU.
STANDING? SITTING?
I MEAN, YA *STILL* GOT THE MOST POWERFUL MUTANT *MIND* IN THE WORLD, *RIGHT?*
THAT'S *GOTTA* MEAN SOMETHING.
NO?

THE GRASS BENEATH MY FEET.
TO BE ABLE TO STAND, STRAIGHT AND TALL.
ALL THESE ARE THINGS THAT "MEAN SOMETHING."
THINGS I MISS.
THERE ARE TIMES, JUBILATION, I BELIEVE...
...WITH ALL MY HEART...
...THAT I WOULD GLADLY EXCHANGE ALL THE PSIONIC ABILITIES IN THE WORLD...
...FOR THE CHANCE TO RUN --
--TO WALK, AGAIN.
IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME --
PROF...!
...IF YOU'RE SERIOUS ABOUT EXPERIENCING THE FINER THINGS IN LIFE --
...SPARE SET SOMEWHERE...
--YOU AIN'T LIVED UNTIL YOU'VE BLADED.

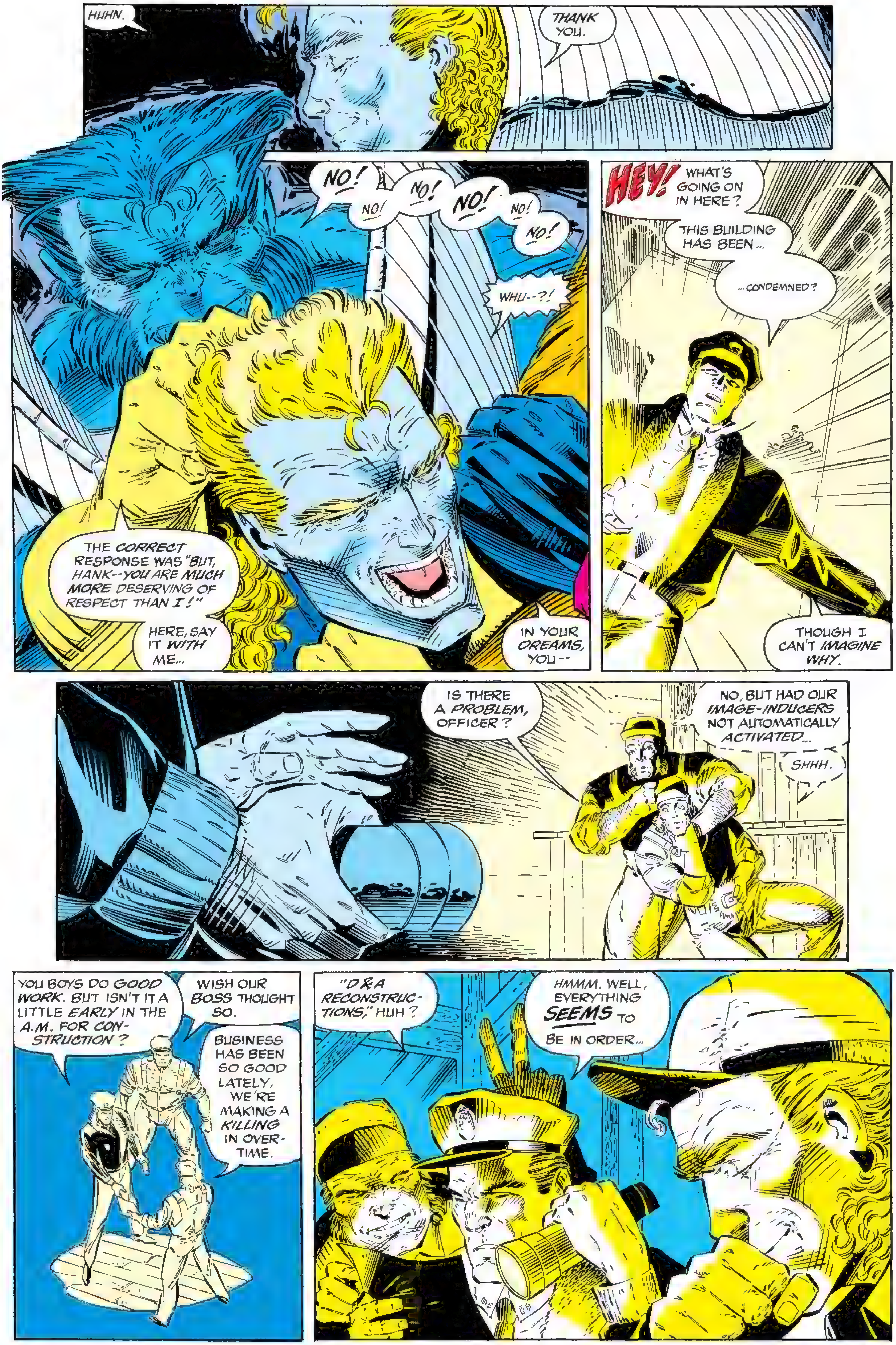

IT AIN'T *FAIR.*
AGAIN, AH'M *HURT*-- SLUGGIN' IT OUT AGAINST SOME *EQUALLY* PATHETIC MUTANT...
...FOR A *PLACE* IN A WORLD THAT DOESN'T WANT *ANY* OF US.
A WORLD IN WHICH AH DON'T EVER HAVE A CHANCE O' FINDIN' *HAPPINESS.*
FINE.
LIFE AS AN *X-MAN.*
AH CAN *DEAL* WITH THAT.
IT'S THE *PERSONAL SIDE* O' MY LIFE WHERE EVERYTHING *FALLS APART.*
ALL AH ASK--ALL AH *NEED*-- IS SOMEBODY T'*HOLD* ME.
STROKE HIS FINGERS THROUGH MUH *HAIR.*
PROMISE ME THAT *EVERYTHIN'S* GONNA BE *FINE*...
...THAT ALL THE *CUTS* AND *BRUISES* ARE *WORTH* IT IN THE END.
MORE THAN *ANYTHING, REMY*...
...AH WANT THAT PERSON T'BE YOU.

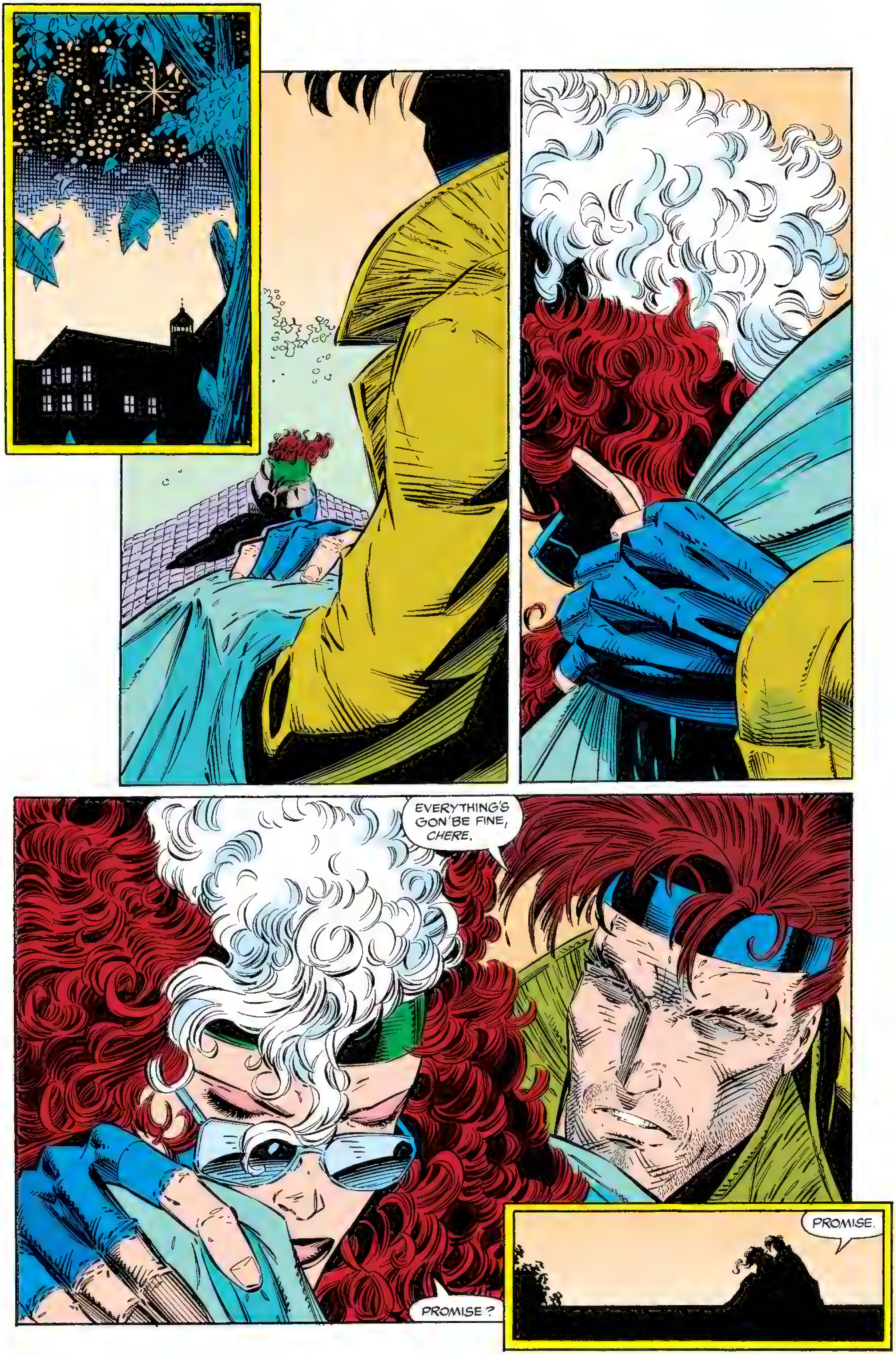

BUT THAT AIN'T *NEVER* GONNA' HAPPEN.
DON'T YA *GET* IT?!
IT *WON'T* HAPPEN 'CAUSE IT *CAN'T!*
WAK!
MY *ENTIRE* MUTANT POWER IS ABOUT *RESTRAINT*--
--AH CAN'T TOUCH ANOTHER LIVIN' PERSON WITHOUT FEAR OF *SWALLOWIN'* THAT PERSON *WHOLE!*
THEIR THOUGHTS AN' HOPES AN' DREAMS BECOME MINE.
AH GOT *NO CONTROL* OVER MY *ABILITIES!*
AN' *YOU?!*
YOU GOT NO CONTROL OVER *YOURSELF.*
CHARGIN' AN OBJECT UP, AND *THROWIN'* IT AWAY--THAT'S YOUR *"SPECIAL GIFT."*
AH *AIN'T* AN OBJECT, *GAMBIT.*
AH'M A *WOMAN.*
IF YA *CAN'T*--
--IF YA *WON'T*--
TREAT ME LIKE ONE, THEN PLEASE...
...LEAVE ME ALONE.

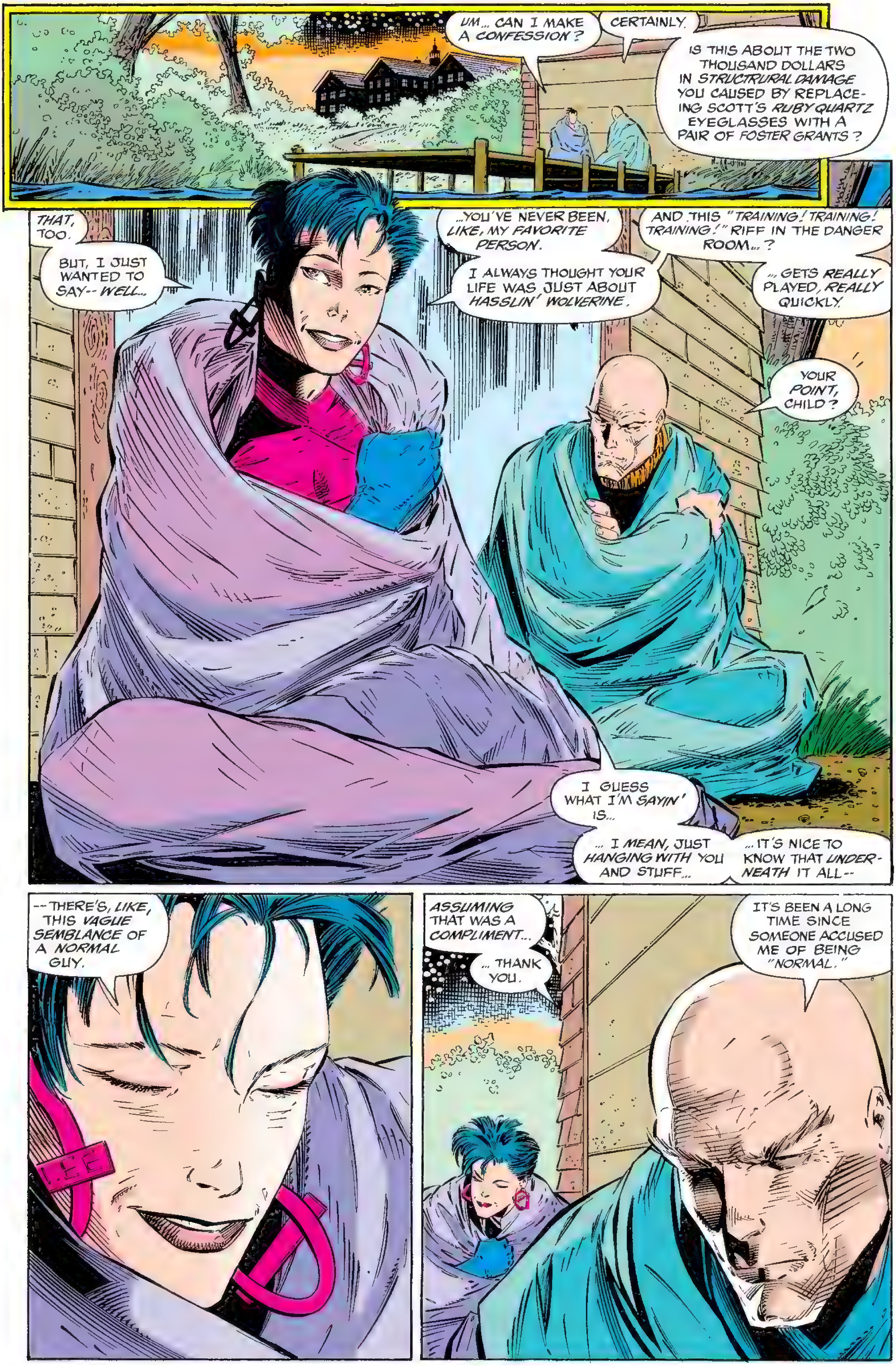

HOW DID I LET YOU TALK ME INTO THIS?
PUH-LEAZE AND A HALF, PROFESSOR-- YOU'RE THE ONE WHO'S ALWAYS GOING OFF IN THE DANGER ROOM...
...THINKING AT US ABOUT PUSHING OURSELVES TO THE MAX AND BACK.
THAT IS DIFFERENT, CHILD. THE DANGER ROOM IS A CONTROLLED ENVIRONMENT WITH AN ELABORATE INFRASTRUCTURE OF SAFEGUARDS AND
YEAH, YEAH, YEAH...
OUT HERE ON THE PAVEMENT IT'S A LOT SIMPLER.
YOU FALL DOWN?
YOU GET UP AND START OVER.
WHAT ARE YOU SCARED ABOUT? YOU'RE A NATURAL.
MOST DUDES PRACTICE HOURS BEFORE THEY GET THIS GOOD.
I AM HARDLY "SCARED."
BUT...
...SHOULD I DIE--
--A COPY OF MY WILL CAN BE FOUND IN THE UPPER RIGHT-HAND DRAWER IN MY STUDY.

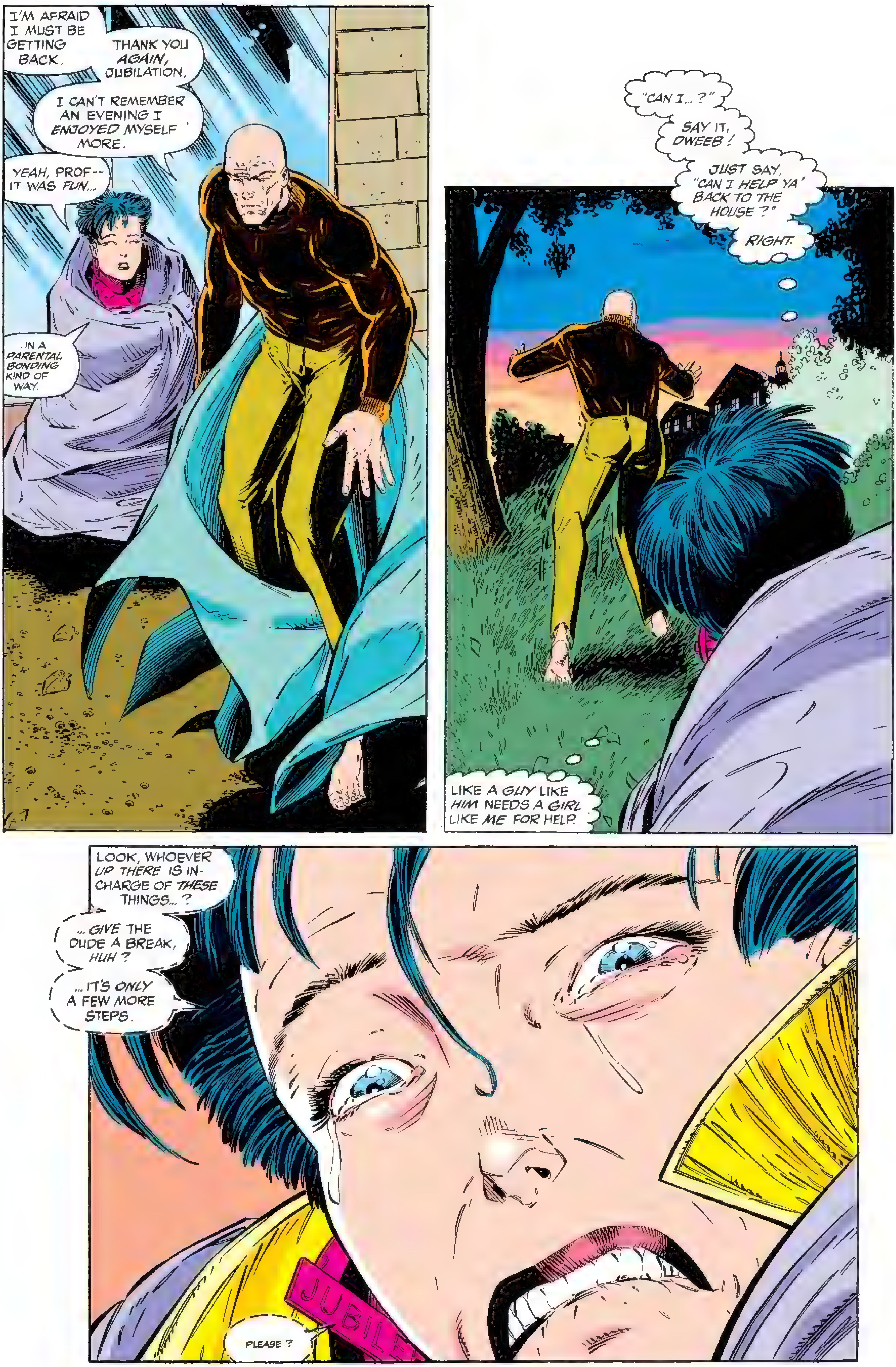

THAT'S IT-- CLOSE YOUR EYES.
JUBILEE
RELAX ALREADY.
ADMIT IT... YOU'RE GETTING INTO THIS.
I CONFESS-- THE SENSATIONS ARE NOT...
...UNPLEASANT.
RIGHTEOUS.
NOW ALL YOU HAVE TO DO--
--IS FORGIVE ME.
"FORGIVE" YOU, CHILD?
FOR WHAT?
FOR THIS!
AGAIN, I ASK-- HOW DID I LET YOU TALK ME INTO THIS?
SPLOOSH!

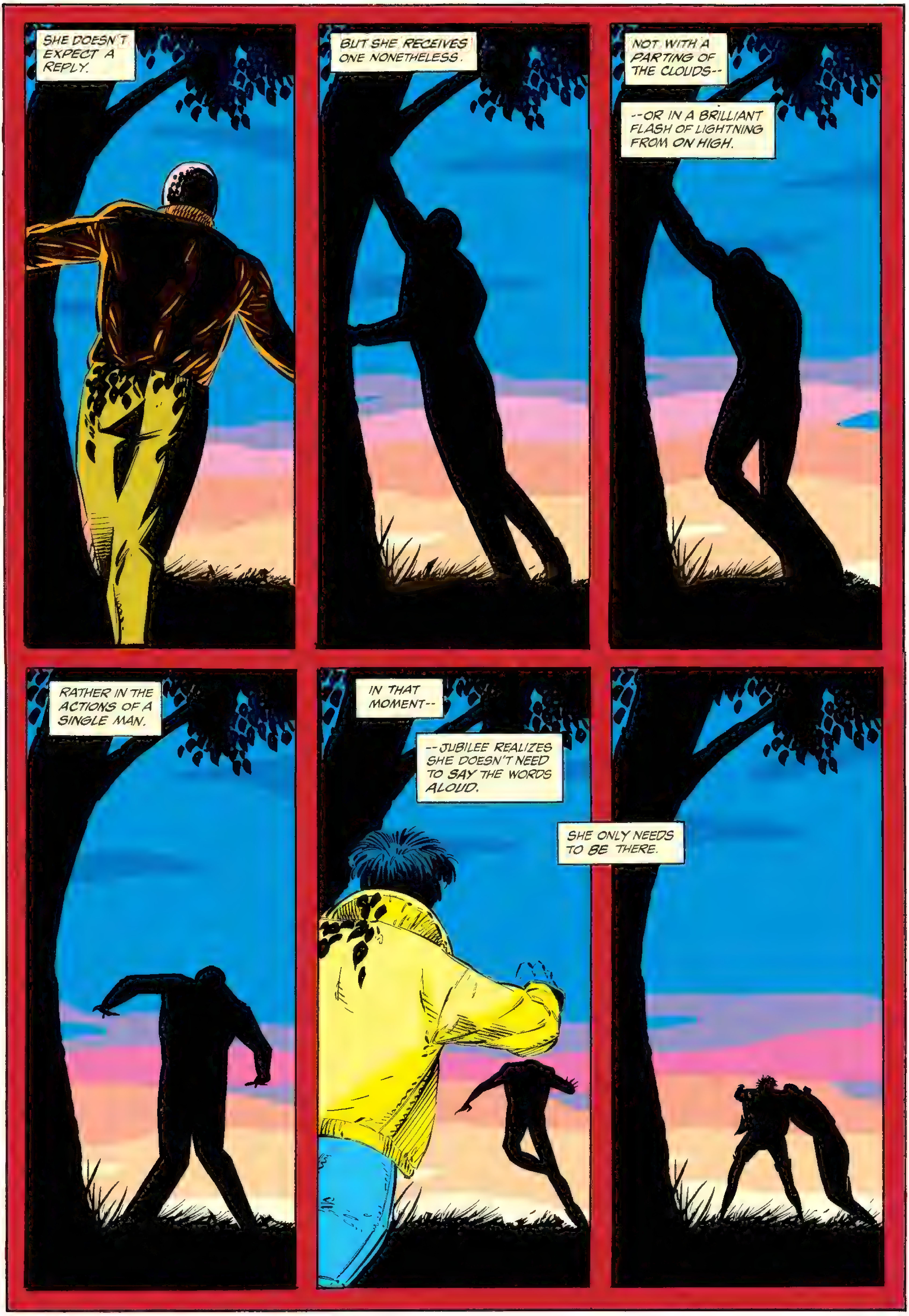
THIS PLACE LOOKS *ALMOST* AS GOOD AS NEW.
NOW, *THERE'S* A THOUGHT THAT HAS ALWAYS *PERPLEXED* ME.
WHAT-- *HOUSE-KEEPING?*
HYUK. HYUK.
I WAS *REFERRING* TO PEOPLE'S PROPENSITY TO EQUATE *"GOOD"* WITH *"NEW."*
THE *IMPLICATION* BEING THE *"OLD"* X-MEN WERE *"BAD."*
ME? I'D GO BACK TO THE *OLD* DAYS IN A HEARTBEAT.
WHO'D HAVE THOUGHT THE DAY WOULD EVER COME THAT I'D ACTUALLY ***MISS*** BEING A *SELF-*ABSORBED BOY MILLIONAIRE?
PITY ALERT! PITY ALERT!
IF WE'RE GOING TO *EXCHANGE* TALES OF WOE--LET ME GO *FIRST.*
I'M *RESPONSIBLE* FOR THE BEAST I AM TODAY BECAUSE I COULDN'T LEAVE *WELL ENOUGH* ALONE.*
*AMAZING ADVENTURES #11 --BEASTIE BOB
CONVERSELY, YOUR CURRENT CONDITION WAS SOMETHING THAT HAPPENED ***TO*** YOU.
O.K.,-- SO IT TOOK YOU A *WHILE* TO GET A *HANDLE* ON THINGS...
...THE POINT IS, YOU DIDN'T LET IT DESTROY YOU. YOU EVEN CAME THROUGH IT ALL A *STRONGER* PERSON.
ABSI*TIV*ELY POSO*LUTE*LY.
YOU REALLY *THINK* SO?
I CAN'T THINK OF A PERSON I *RESPECT* MORE THAN YOU, WARREN.

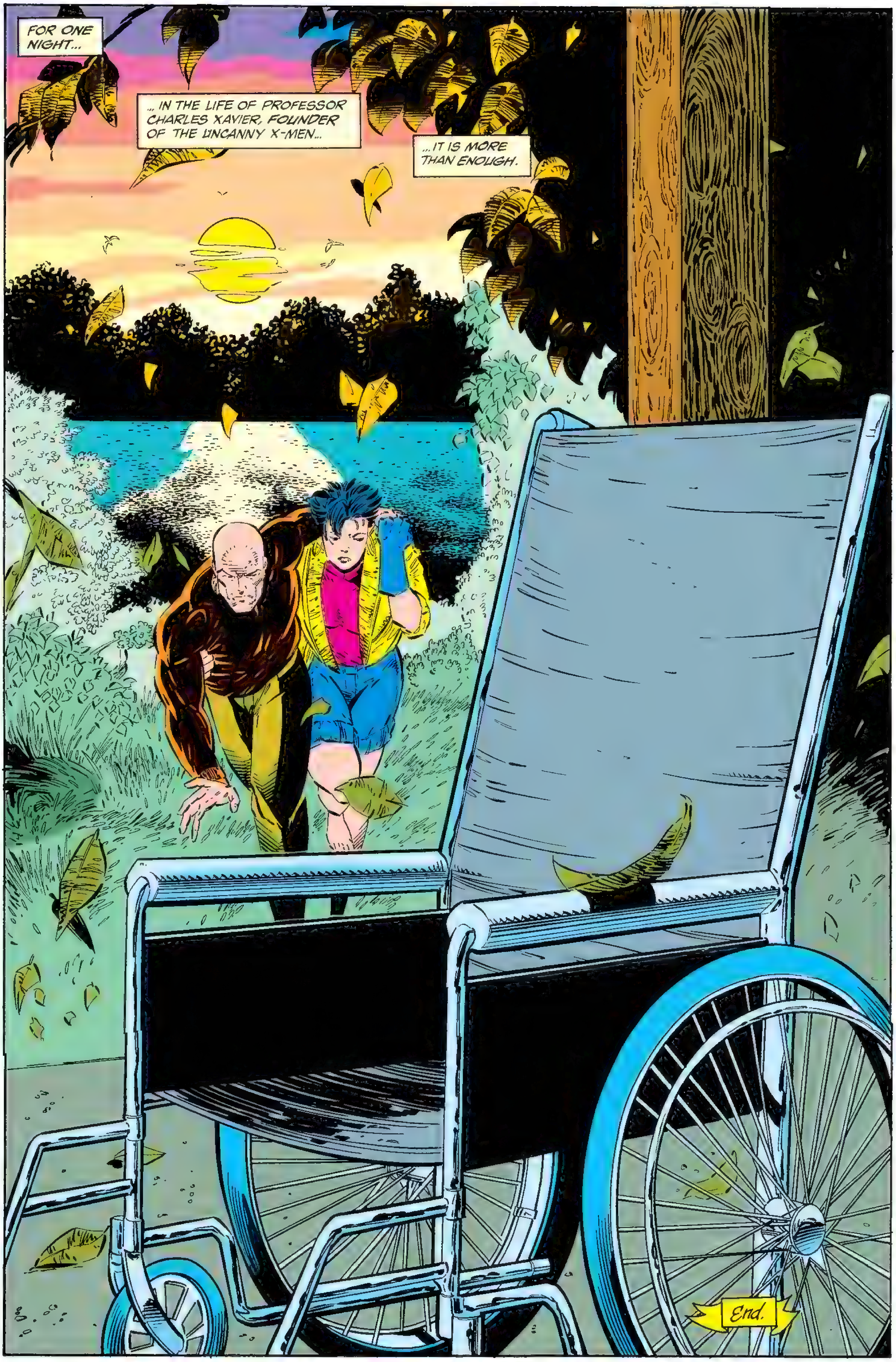

HUHN.
THANK YOU.
NO! NO! NO! NO! NO! NO!
WHU--?!
THE CORRECT RESPONSE WAS "BUT, HANK--YOU ARE MUCH MORE DESERVING OF RESPECT THAN I!"
HERE, SAY IT WITH ME...
IN YOUR DREAMS, YOU--
HEY! WHAT'S GOING ON IN HERE?
THIS BUILDING HAS BEEN...
...CONDEMNED?
THOUGH I CAN'T IMAGINE WHY.
IS THERE A PROBLEM, OFFICER?
NO, BUT HAD OUR IMAGE-INDUCERS NOT AUTOMATICALLY ACTIVATED...
SHHH.
YOU BOYS DO GOOD WORK. BUT ISN'T IT A LITTLE EARLY IN THE A.M. FOR CONSTRUCTION?
WISH OUR BOSS THOUGHT SO.
BUSINESS HAS BEEN SO GOOD LATELY, WE'RE MAKING A KILLING IN OVERTIME.
"D & A RECONSTRUCTIONS," HUH?
HMMM, WELL, EVERYTHING SEEMS TO BE IN ORDER...

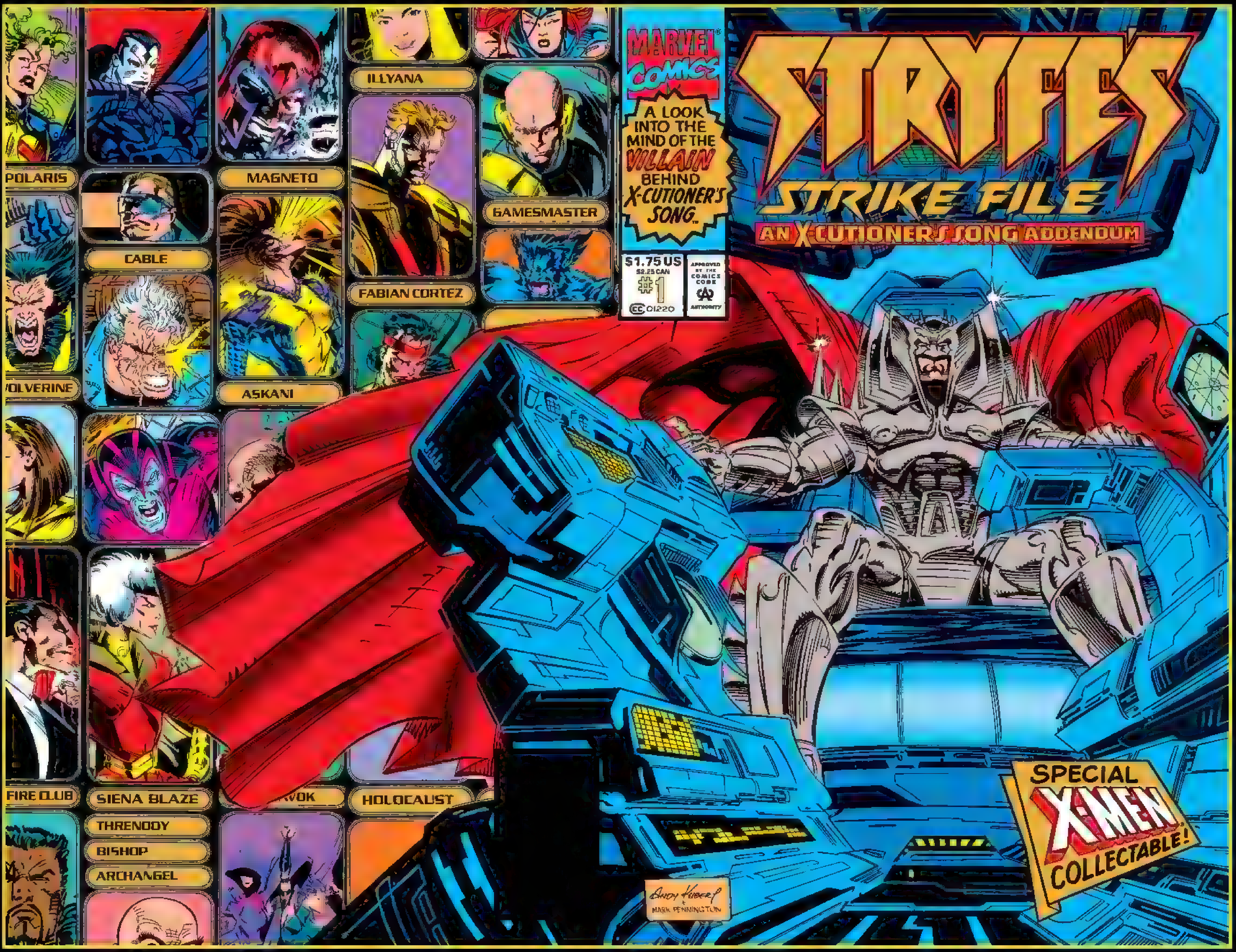

EVERYTHING'S GON'BE FINE, CHERE.
PROMISE?
PROMISE.


UM... CAN I MAKE A *CONFESSION*?
CERTAINLY.
IS THIS ABOUT THE TWO THOUSAND DOLLARS IN *STRUCTRURAL DAMAGE* YOU CAUSED BY REPLACING SCOTT'S *RUBY QUARTZ* EYEGLASSES WITH A PAIR OF *FOSTER GRANTS*?
THAT, TOO.
BUT, I JUST WANTED TO SAY-- *WELL...*
...YOU'VE NEVER BEEN, *LIKE,* MY *FAVORITE PERSON.*
I ALWAYS THOUGHT YOUR LIFE WAS JUST ABOUT *HASSLIN' WOLVERINE.*
AND THIS *"TRAINING! TRAINING! TRAINING!"* RIFF IN THE DANGER ROOM...?
...GETS *REALLY* PLAYED, *REALLY* QUICKLY.
YOUR *POINT,* CHILD?
I GUESS WHAT I'M *SAYIN'* IS...
... I *MEAN,* JUST *HANGING WITH* YOU AND STUFF...
...IT'S NICE TO KNOW THAT *UNDERNEATH* IT ALL--
--THERE'S, *LIKE,* THIS *VAGUE SEMBLANCE* OF A *NORMAL* GUY.
ASSUMING THAT WAS A *COMPLIMENT...*
... THANK YOU.
IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME SINCE SOMEONE ACCUSED ME OF BEING "NORMAL."


I'M AFRAID I MUST BE GETTING BACK.
THANK YOU *AGAIN*, JUBILATION.
I CAN'T REMEMBER AN EVENING I *ENJOYED* MYSELF MORE.
YEAH, PROF-- IT WAS *FUN*...
...IN A *PARENTAL BONDING* KIND OF WAY.
"CAN I... ?"
SAY IT, *DWEEB*!
JUST SAY, "CAN I *HELP* YA' BACK TO THE HOUSE ?"
RIGHT.
LIKE A *GUY* LIKE *HIM* NEEDS A *GIRL* LIKE *ME* FOR HELP.
LOOK, WHOEVER *UP THERE* IS IN-CHARGE OF *THESE* THINGS... ?
...*GIVE* THE DUDE A BREAK, *HUH* ?
...IT'S *ONLY* A FEW MORE STEPS.
PLEASE ?
JUBILE


SHE DOESN'T EXPECT A REPLY.
BUT SHE RECEIVES ONE NONETHELESS.
NOT WITH A PARTING OF THE CLOUDS--
--OR IN A BRILLIANT FLASH OF LIGHTNING FROM ON HIGH.
RATHER IN THE ACTIONS OF A SINGLE MAN.
IN THAT MOMENT--
--JUBILEE REALIZES SHE DOESN'T NEED TO SAY THE WORDS ALOUD.
SHE ONLY NEEDS TO BE THERE.


FOR ONE NIGHT...
...IN THE LIFE OF PROFESSOR CHARLES XAVIER, FOUNDER OF THE UNCANNY X-MEN...
...IT IS MORE THAN ENOUGH.
End.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STRYFE'S
STRIKE FILE
AN X-CUTIONER'S SONG ADDENDUM
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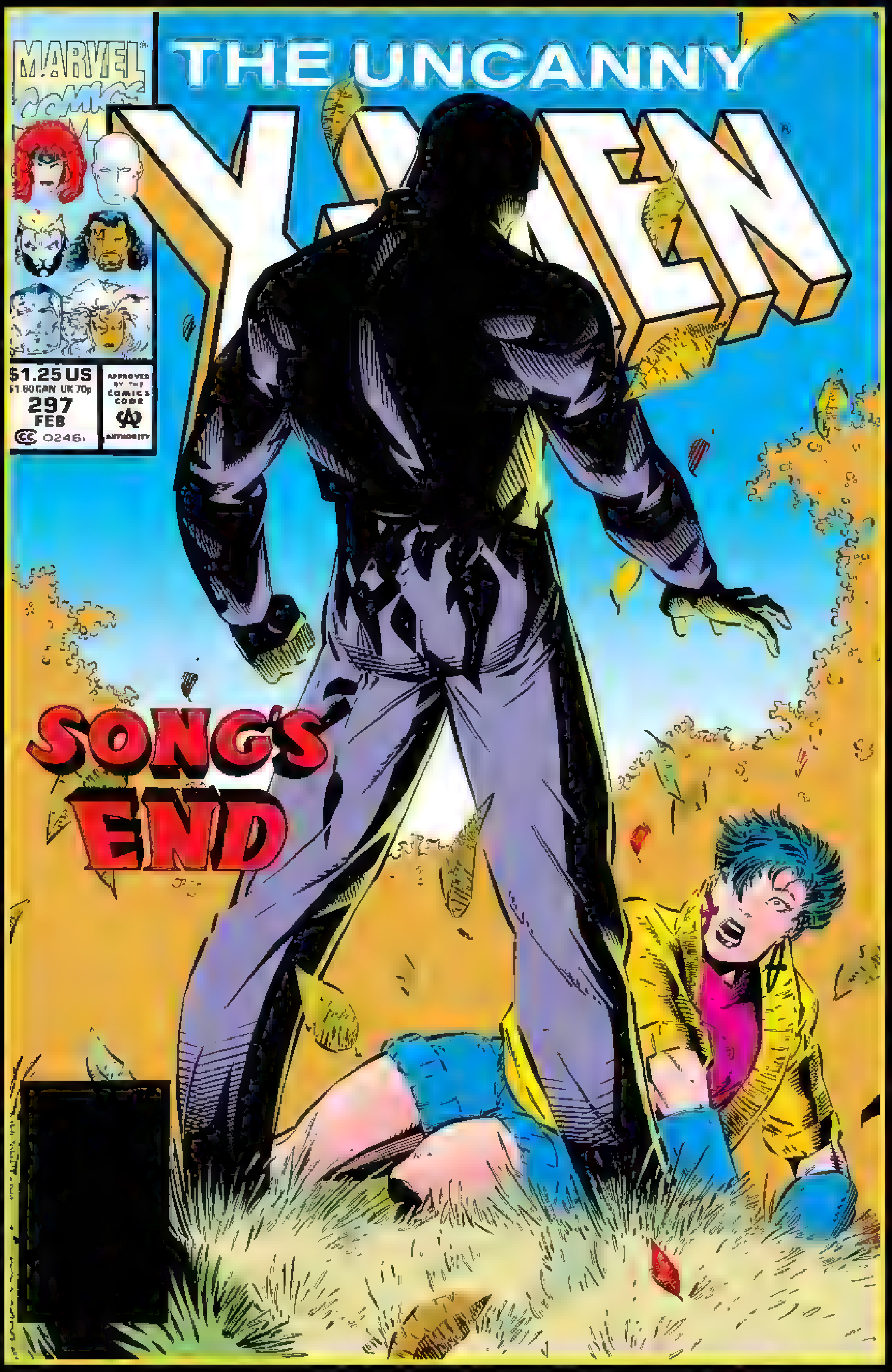
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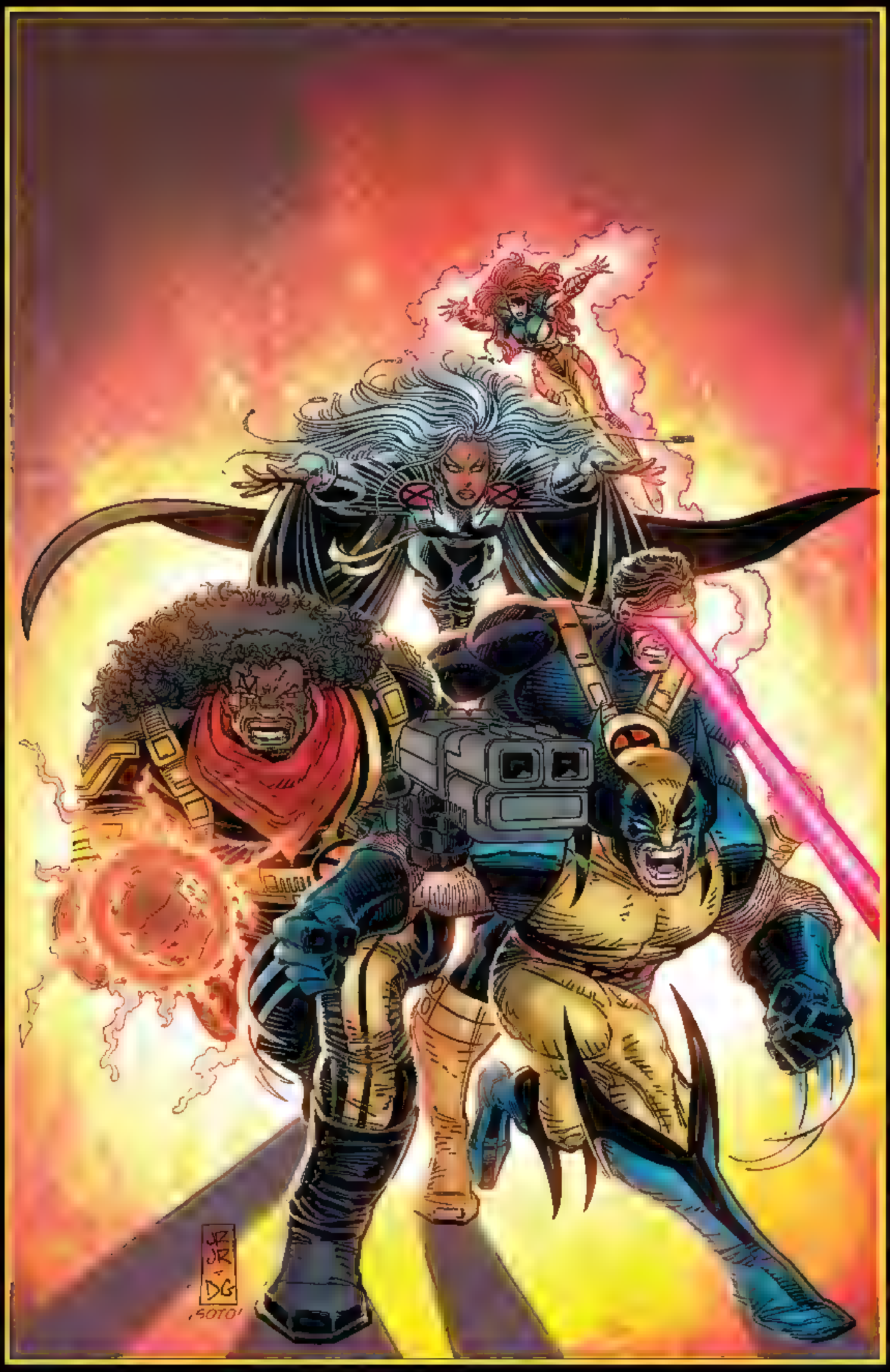

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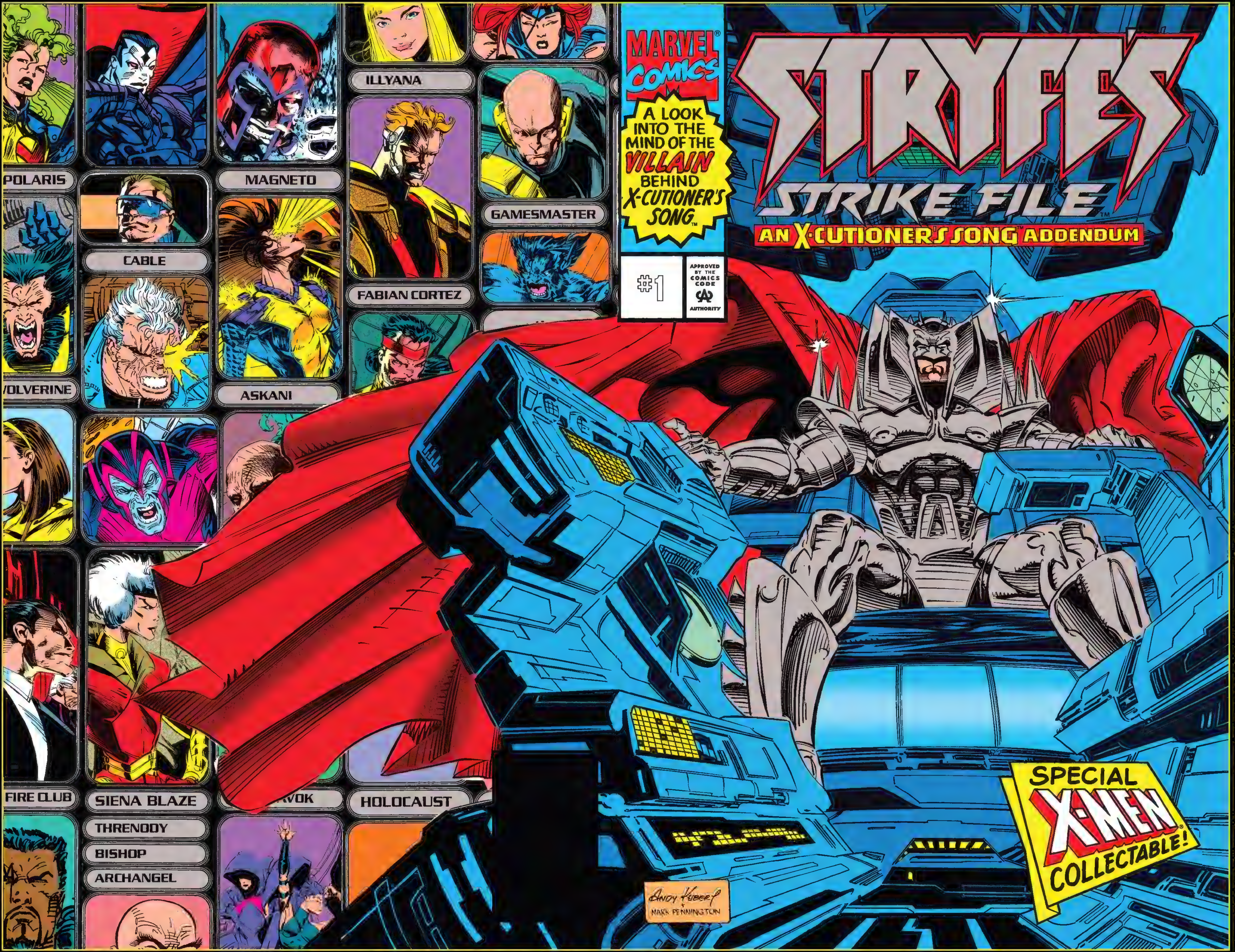
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STRYFE'S STRIKE FILE™
AN X-CUTIONER'S SONG™ ADDENDUM
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ILLYANA
GAMESMASTER
CABLE
FABIAN CORTEZ
VOLVERINE
ASKANI
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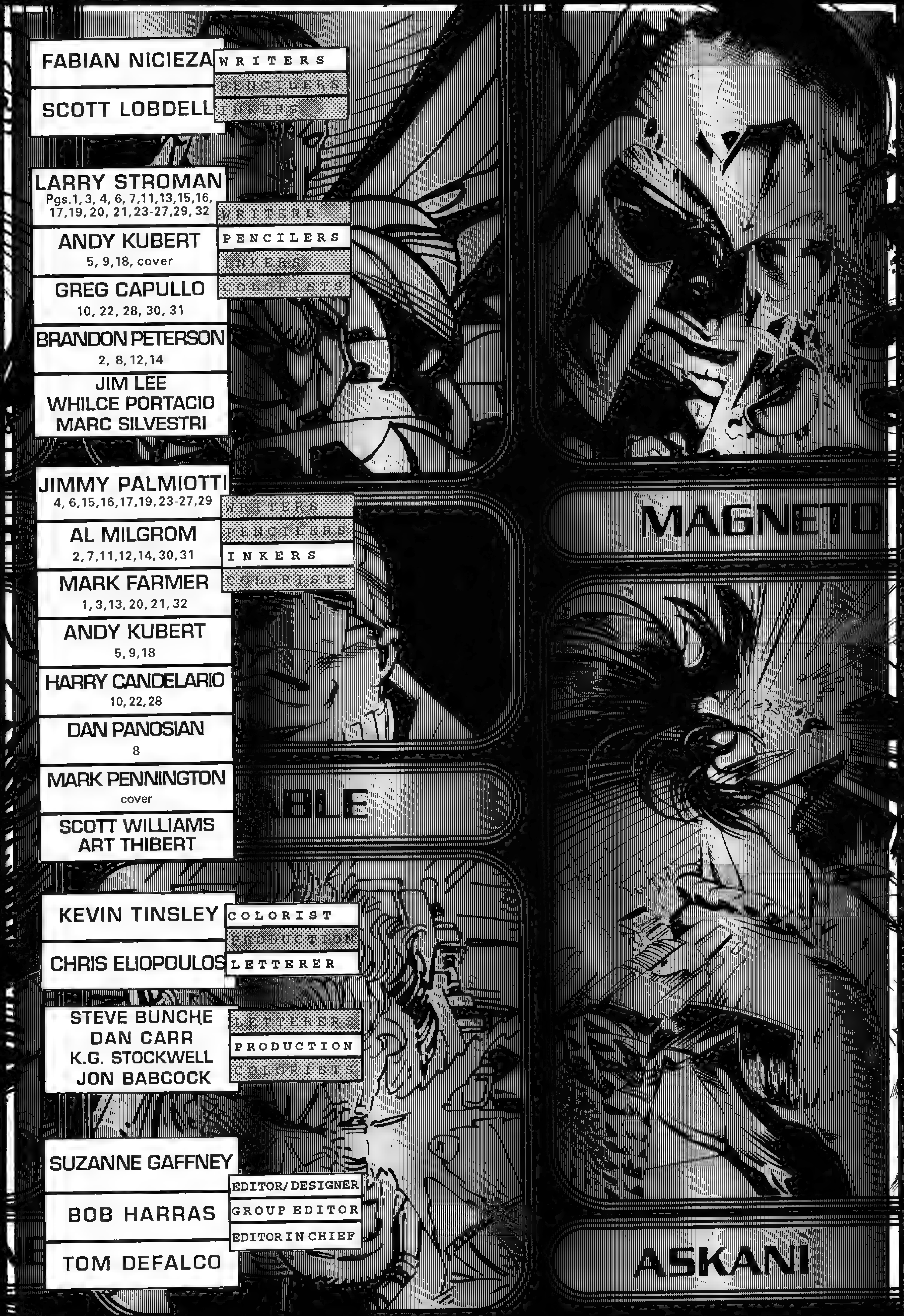

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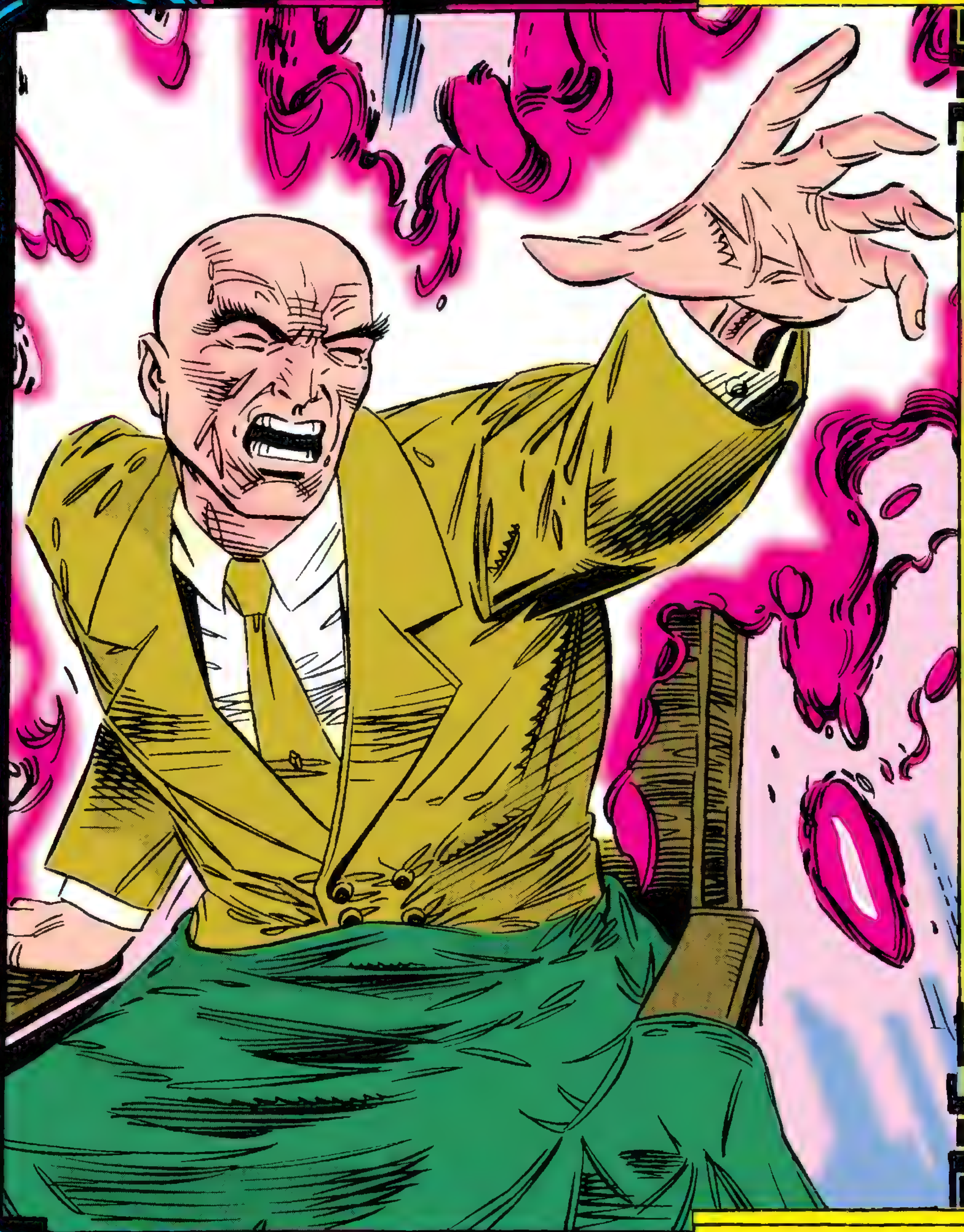
AFTERNOON AT THE **SCHOOL FOR GIFTED YOUNGSTERS** IN WESTCHESTER, NEW YORK.
A BRISK AUTUMN WIND WHIPS THROUGH THE DYING LEAVES--
--THE RUSTLING, CHAFING SOUND CARRIES THROUGH THE OPENED WINDOW OF **CHARLES XAVIER'S** STUDY.
FOR A MOMENT, THE NOISE REMINDS XAVIER OF A GERSHWIN SONG.
HE HUMS THE MELODY, THEN REALIZES HE HASN'T SUNG FOR A LONG TIME.
HIS MOTHER USED TO LOVE HIS VOICE BEFORE PUBERTY SET IN... AND HIS VOICE CHANGED... ALONG WITH **OTHER** THINGS...
XAVIER IS A **MUTANT.** BORN WITH **TELEPATHIC ABILITIES** WHICH MANIFESTED THEMSELVES DURING HIS ADOLESCENCE.
TO SOME, THAT WOULD BE A BOON; TO OTHERS A BURDEN.
TO XAVIER, IT HAS BEEN **BOTH.** HE RECUPERATES NOW FROM A **MURDER** ATTEMPT ON HIS LIFE. AN ATTEMPT TO SHATTER HIS **DREAM.**
THE MAN BEHIND THE THWARTED ASSASSINATION WAS NAMED **STRYFE.** A MEGALOMANIACAL MUTANT.
HE IS **DEAD** NOW, CONSUMED BY HIS OWN MANIPULATIONS OF TIME AND ORDER.
BUT HE LEFT A **LEGACY** BEHIND, OF SORTS. A COLLECTION OF THOUGHTS AND DEEDS, ANALYSIS AND PREDICTIONS.
A **COMPUTER DISK** FOUND BY THE X-MAN, **BISHOP,** IN STRYFE'S BASE ON THE MOON AND TURNED OVER TO XAVIER, UNSEEN AND UNHEARD.
DISKETTE IN HARD-DRIVE
CONVERTING TO DOS .233
UNTIL **NOW...**



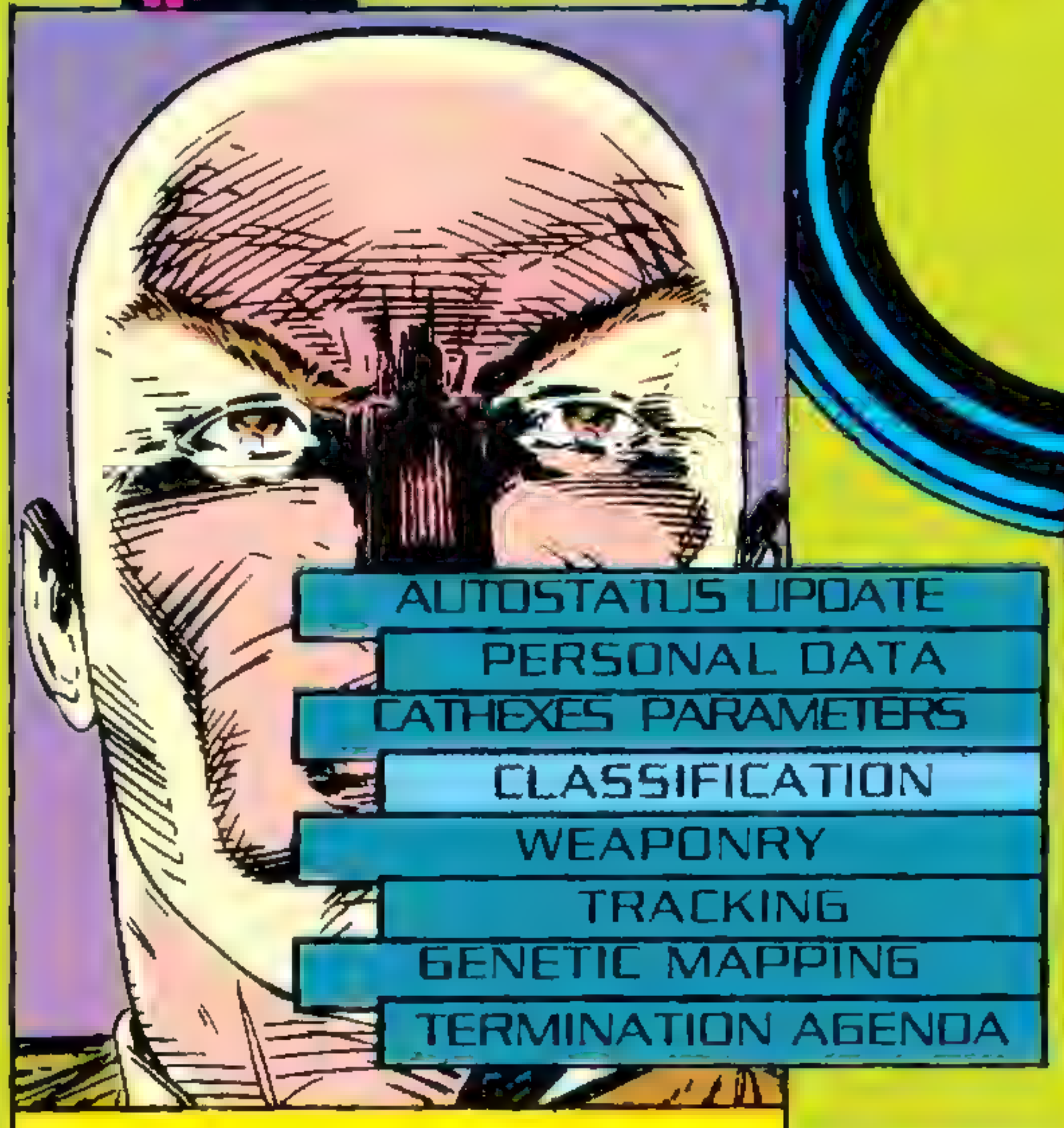
XAVIER What will it be then, Charles? Are you to be the caring grandfather, rocking your charges with gentility and ease? The soft-minded senile proponent of "Happily ever after" — of a future where man and mutant live together in harmony and peace? Or are you the caretaker of a time bomb — the clumsy handler of a walking nuclear arsenal?

Which is it going to be, preacher of the open hand? Can you decide what you are going to be?

I can.

I am the trigger, Charles. The hatred which links your dream to my nightmare is the fuse. And with your death, the match has been struck.

Now let the ensuing explosion rock both heaven and hell. . .both yesterday and tomorrow. . .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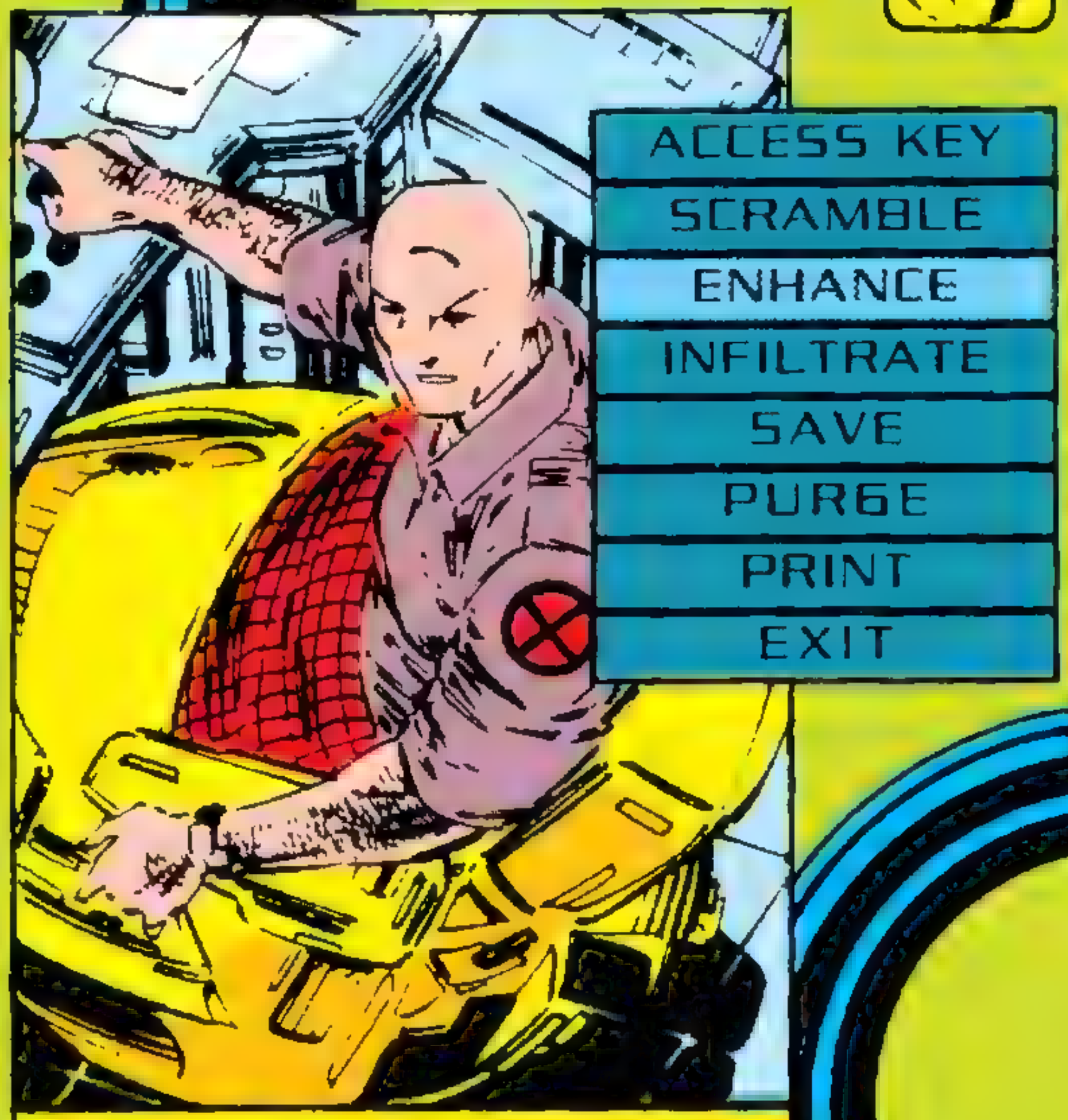
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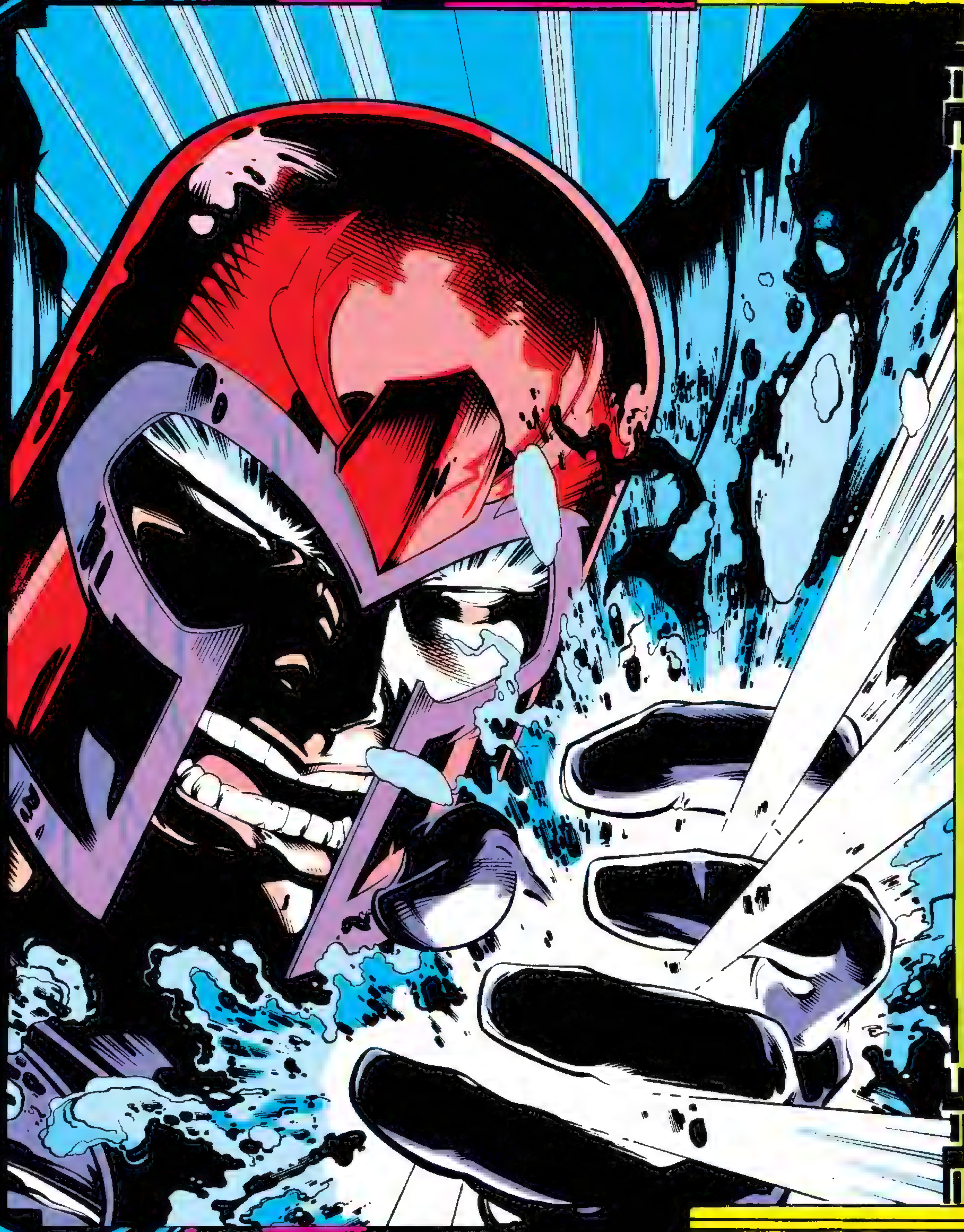


MAGNETO Father of the justifiable means. Teacher of the slapping caress. A man who understood the necessity to preach peace and love, but fight for what he believed in.

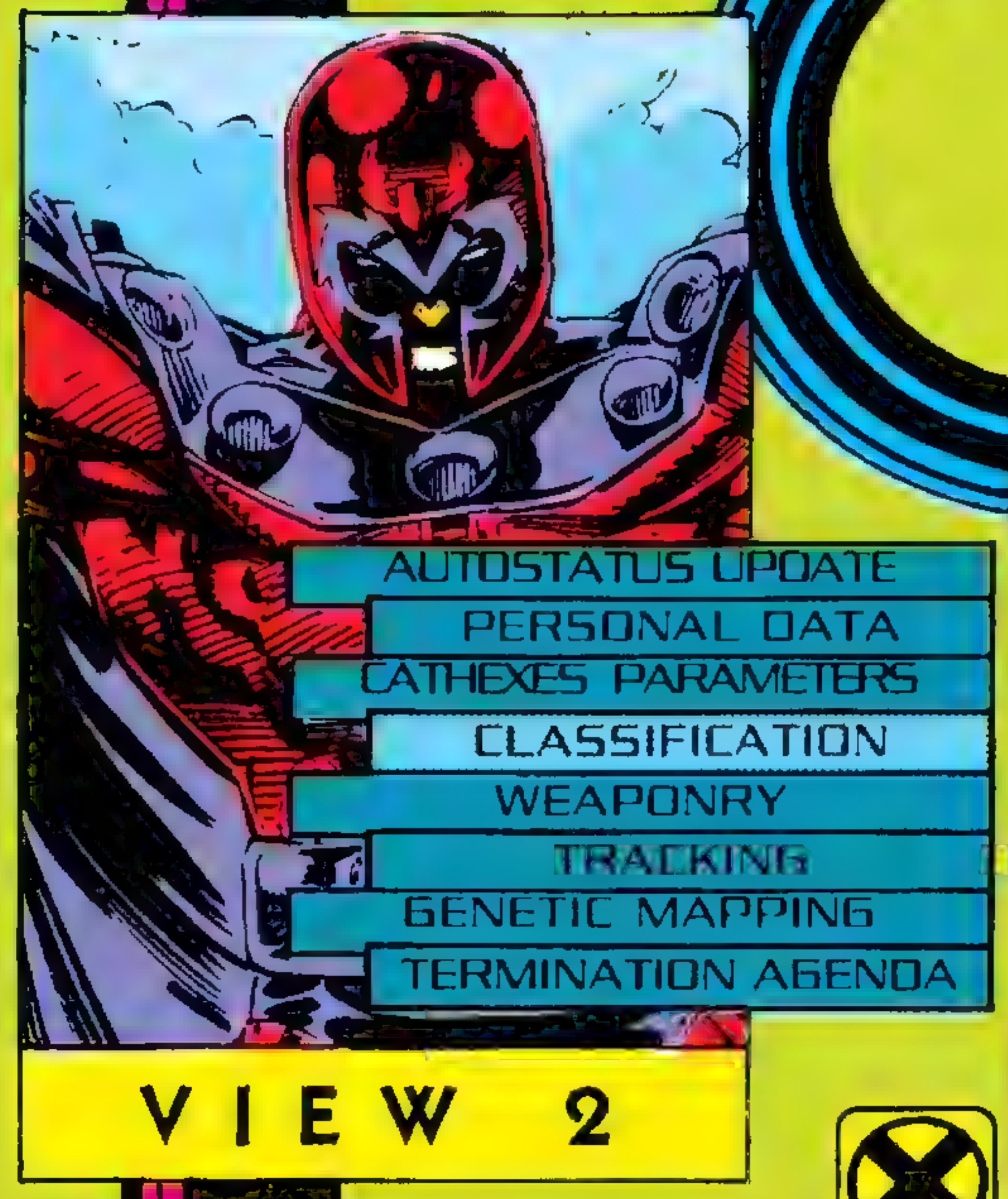
Inevitably, Magnus died as he lived, alone, confused, betrayed. The Master of Magnetism was always a man who believed so strongly in his ideals, that he could not find the means to compromise himself for the sake of a chance at tomorrow.

Forever Lancelot to Xavier's King Arthur, forever the tortured soul who desired tranquility but espoused brutality, Magneto has always been as flawed in his viewpoints, his judgments and his methods, as he claimed his mirror-brother was.

Neither of them learned, in their hard, lonely lives, that *both* their methods, working in unison, side-by-side, were what the mutants of this dismal mudball needed.

More the fools them, more the pity us.

If both men had learned to accept what was necessary in the other, perhaps the people of *my* time would not have had to endure the kind of cruel existence life has slapped them with. Perhaps the world could have been the kind of harmonious utopia both men envisioned.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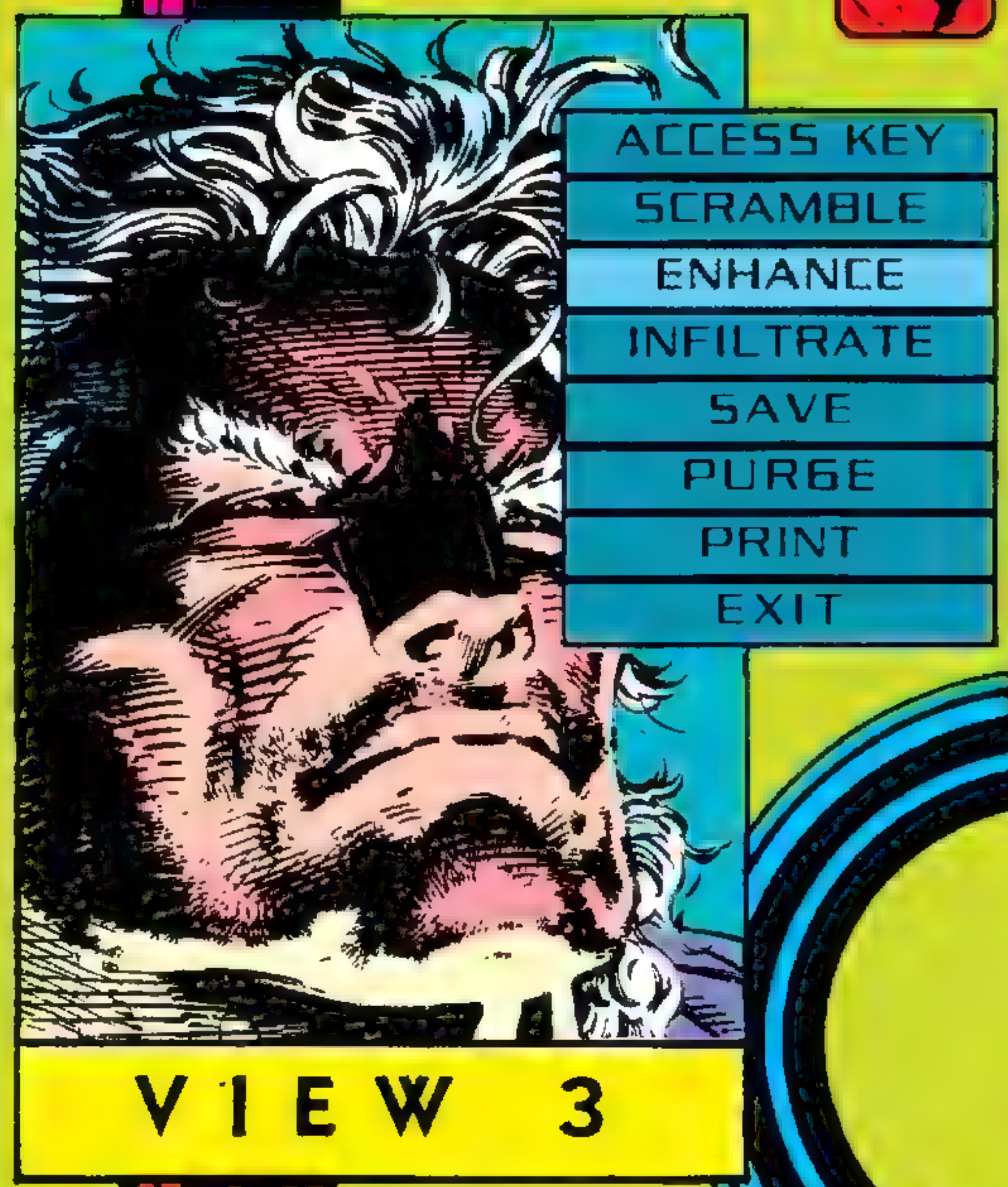
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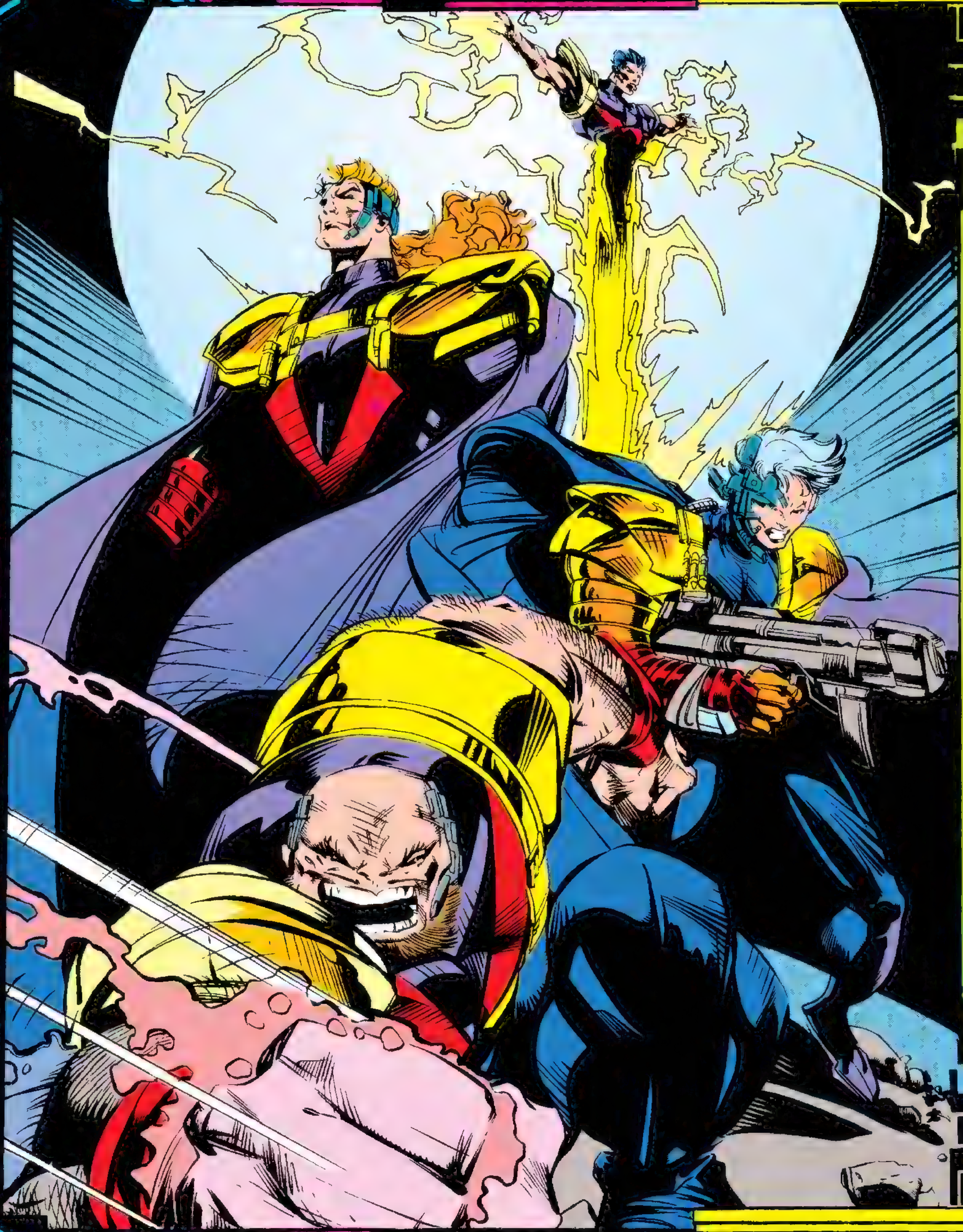
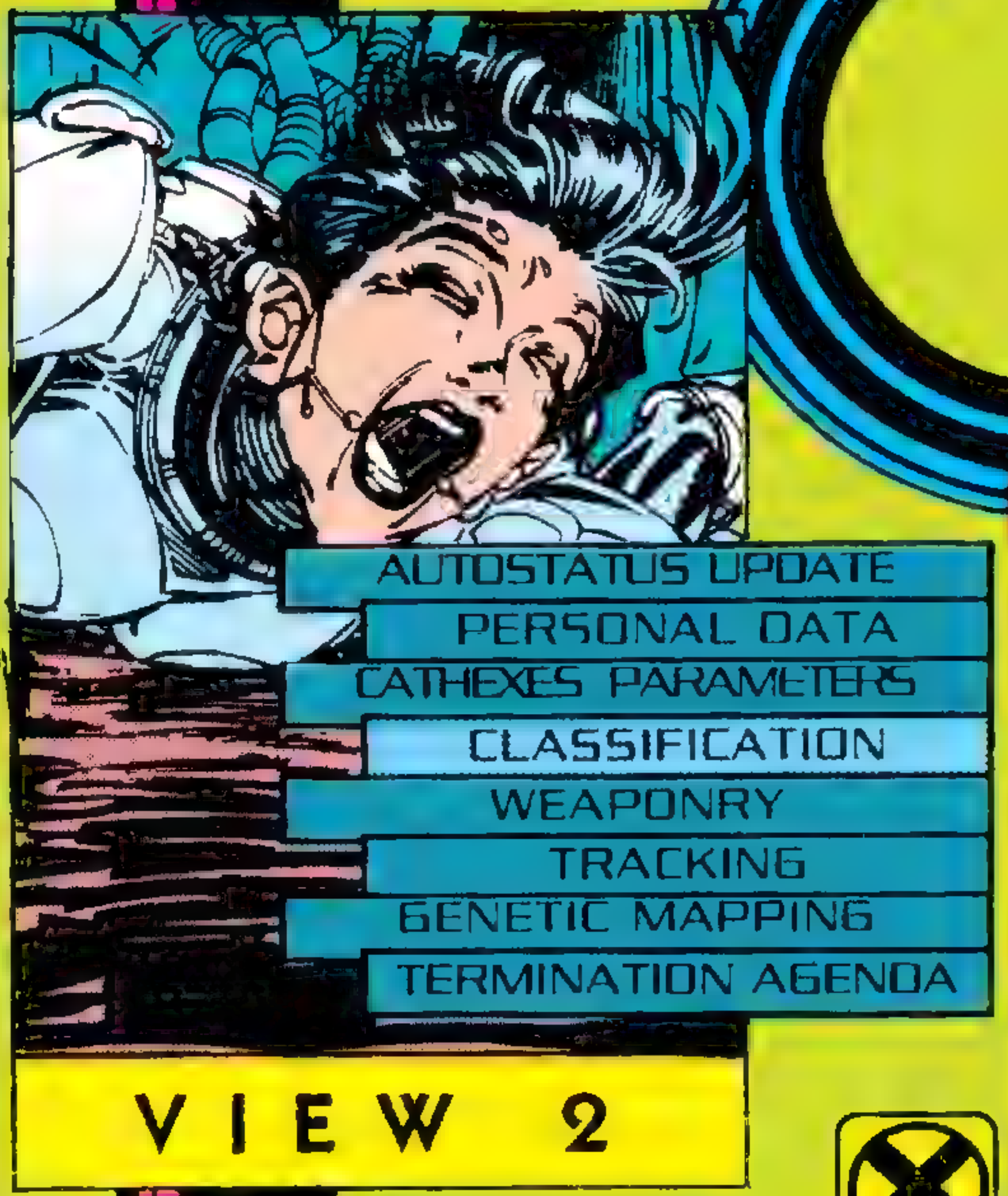


THE ACOLYTES If it is true, that religion is the opium of the *masses*, how much more potent an effect does it have on a mere *handful* of individuals?

Collectively, they are known as the Acolytes — a fanatical sect of mutant zealots dedicated in thought and deed to the memory of the genetic warlord, Magneto. Like many a believer, however, they chose to concentrate on their reluctant Messiah's more unenlightened times — when he fervently believed there was no way for man and mutant to share the Earth in peaceful coexistence. With Magneto recently elevated to the role of martyr, his congregation is now firmly in the grip of Fabian Cortez — the closet Upstart with his own agenda.

It will be interesting to see what the voluntary induction of an X-Man among their number will have on the rest of the Acolytes — though in all fairness, the inevitable resurrection of their savior will no doubt be paramount in their thoughts...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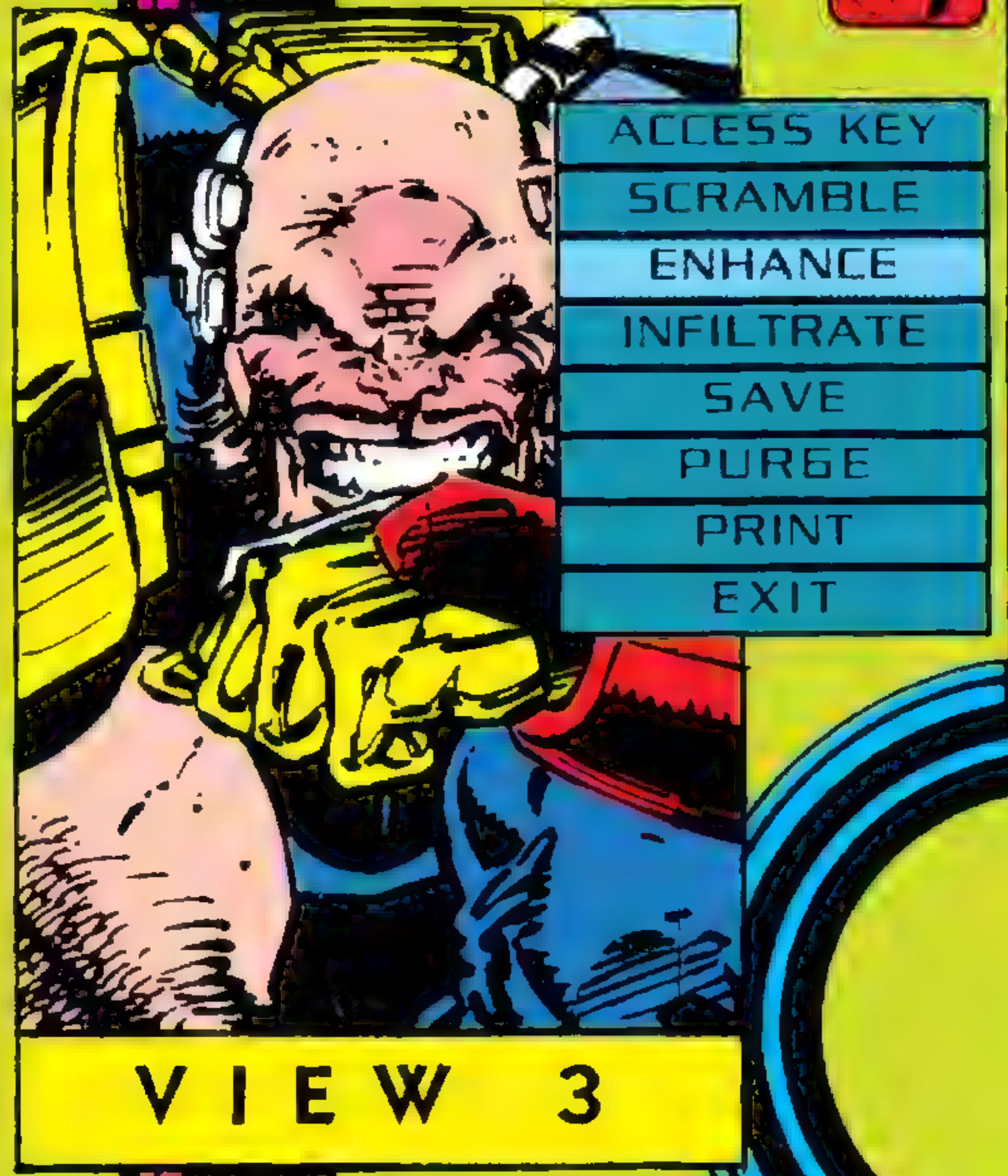
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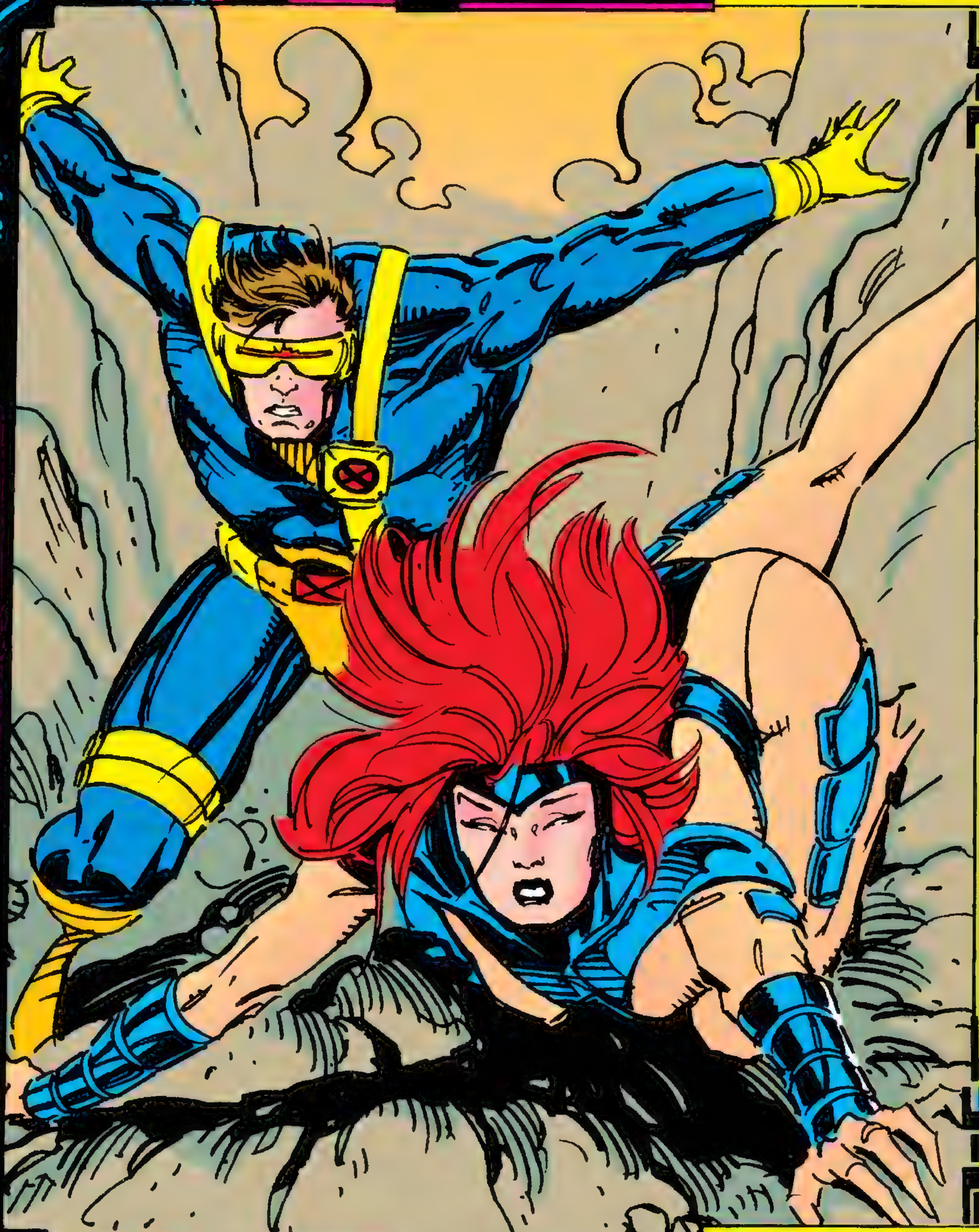
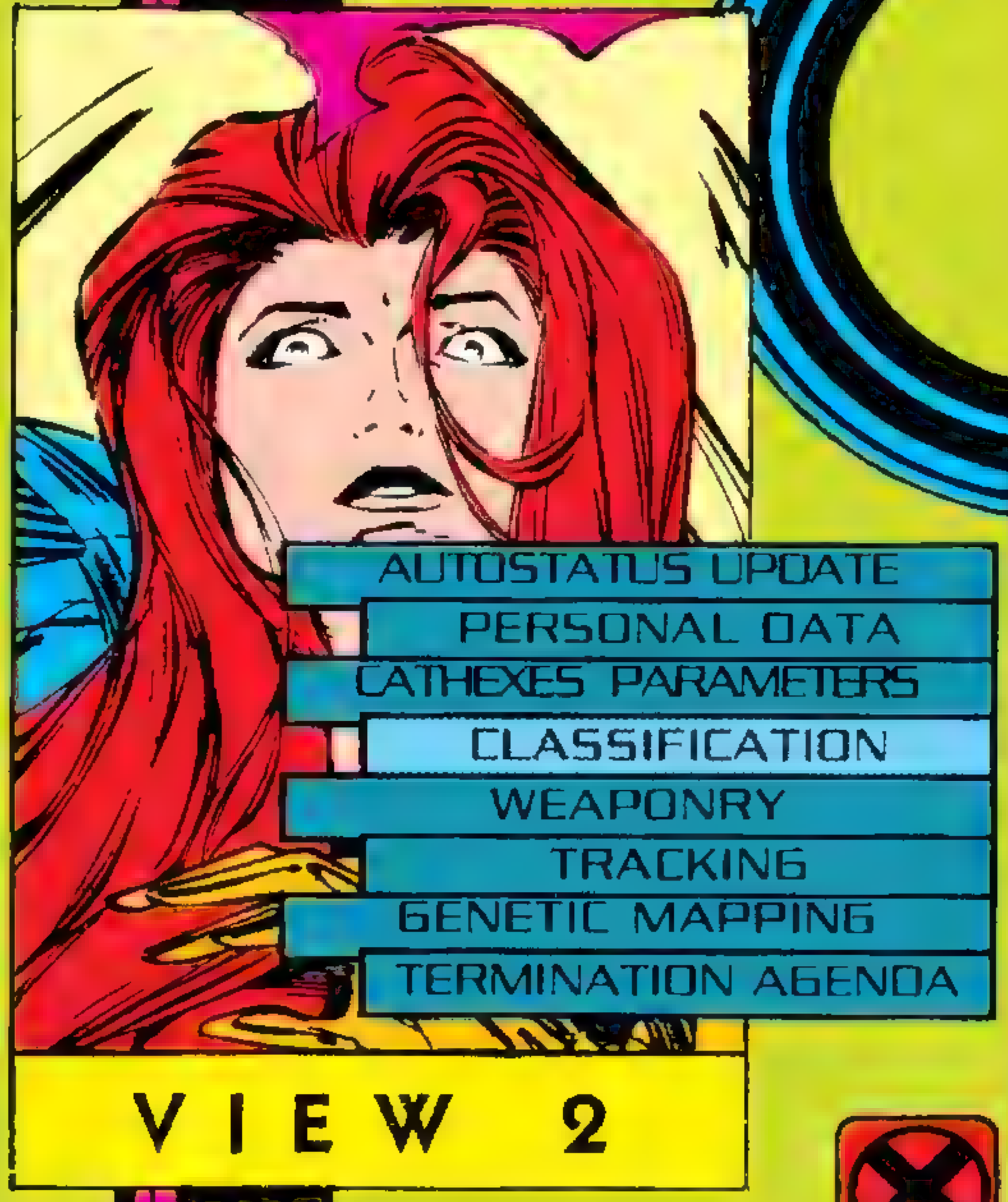


JEAN GREY & CYCLOPS If my plans continue apace, I will have had the opportunity to face you, to speak with you — to wipe a tear from your eye. All the things you never had the opportunity to do.

I hate you both for that — for denying me that which you owed me! That which every generation owes the next — a chance to love — to learn — to grow — from the wisdom of its forerunners.

But I learned a completely different set of lessons without either of you. I learned of bitterness and loneliness — anger and agony. I learned of love . . . and hate. "Mother and Father" of the mutant destiny — tonight, the child of tomorrow's hate will destroy you both!

And I will make you both proud. . . because I've learned my lessons well . . .and you will see that no one hates you both more than I. . .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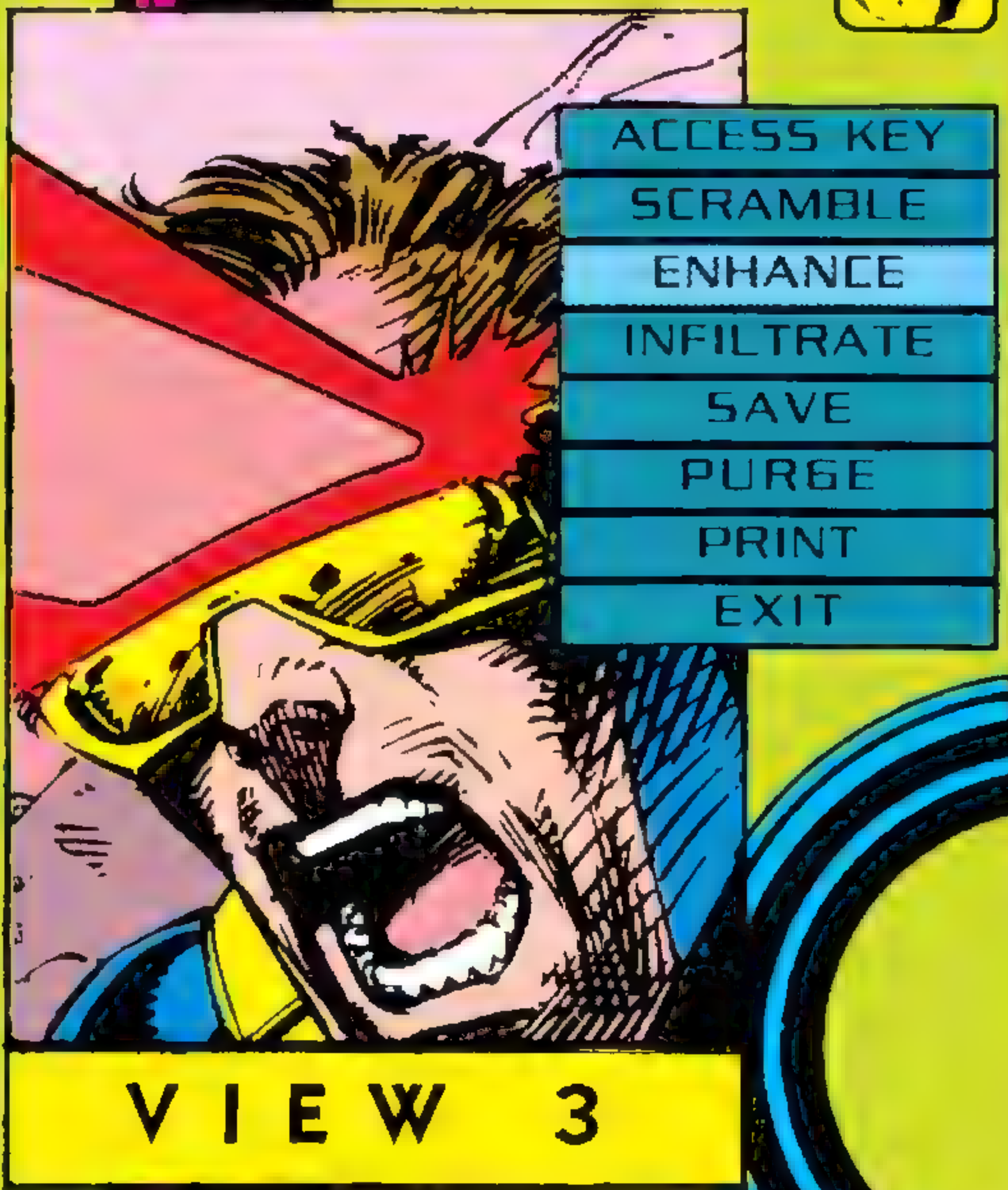
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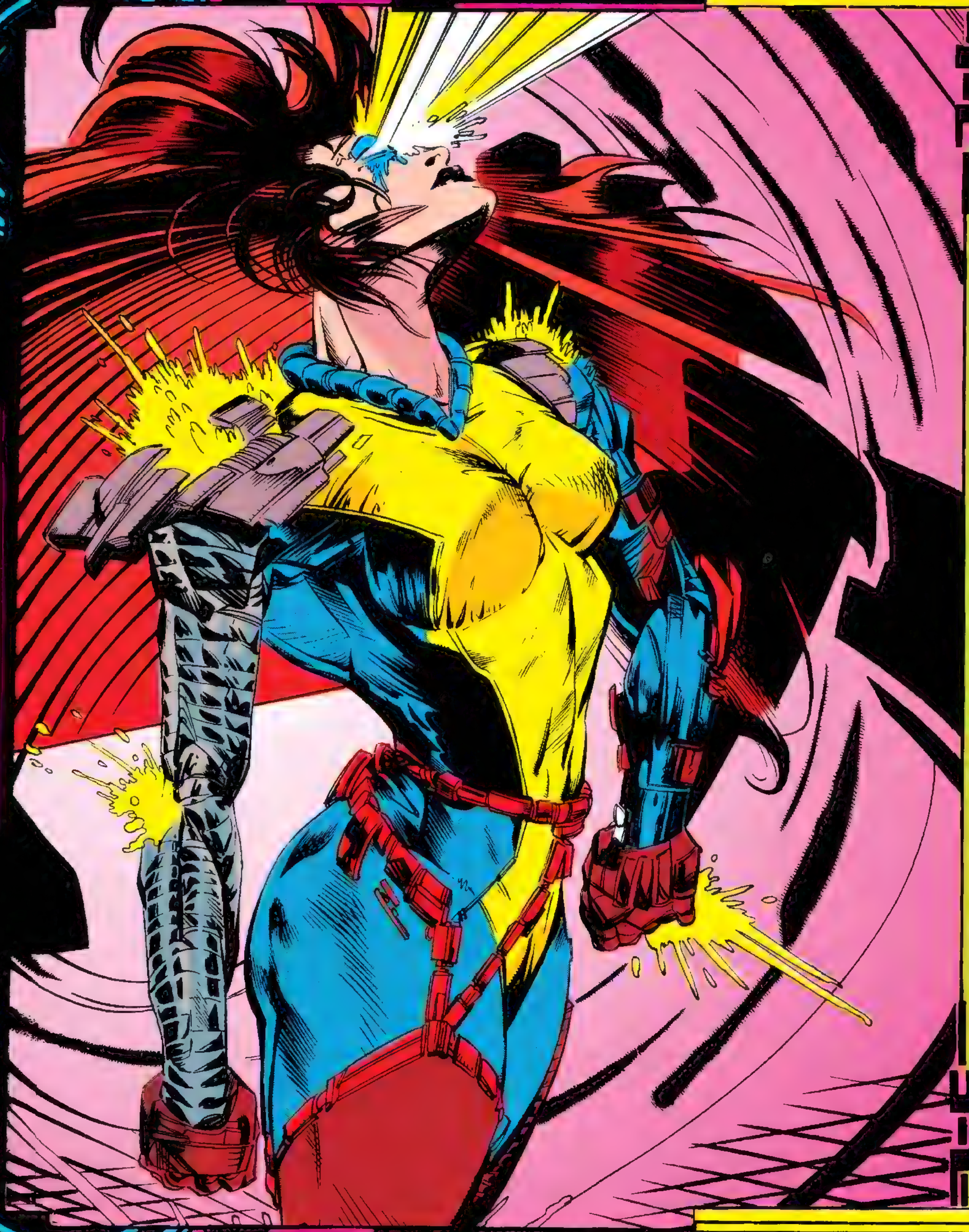


ASKANI Daughter to the pain and torture of the Tomorrow Killer. Mother and succor to the Dayspring, son of the Morning Fire.

So little have I learned about you, Askani. To me, you were nothing more than a cause for minor distraction. A Clan leader of some distinction, certainly with a stoked fire in your belly, but barely worth my attentions.

Had I known then, what I know now about your actions, I believe I would have taken the time to get to know you better, to wring your neck in my clenched hands. In many ways, Askani, you are the reason I am even alive, and the reason I am really dead.

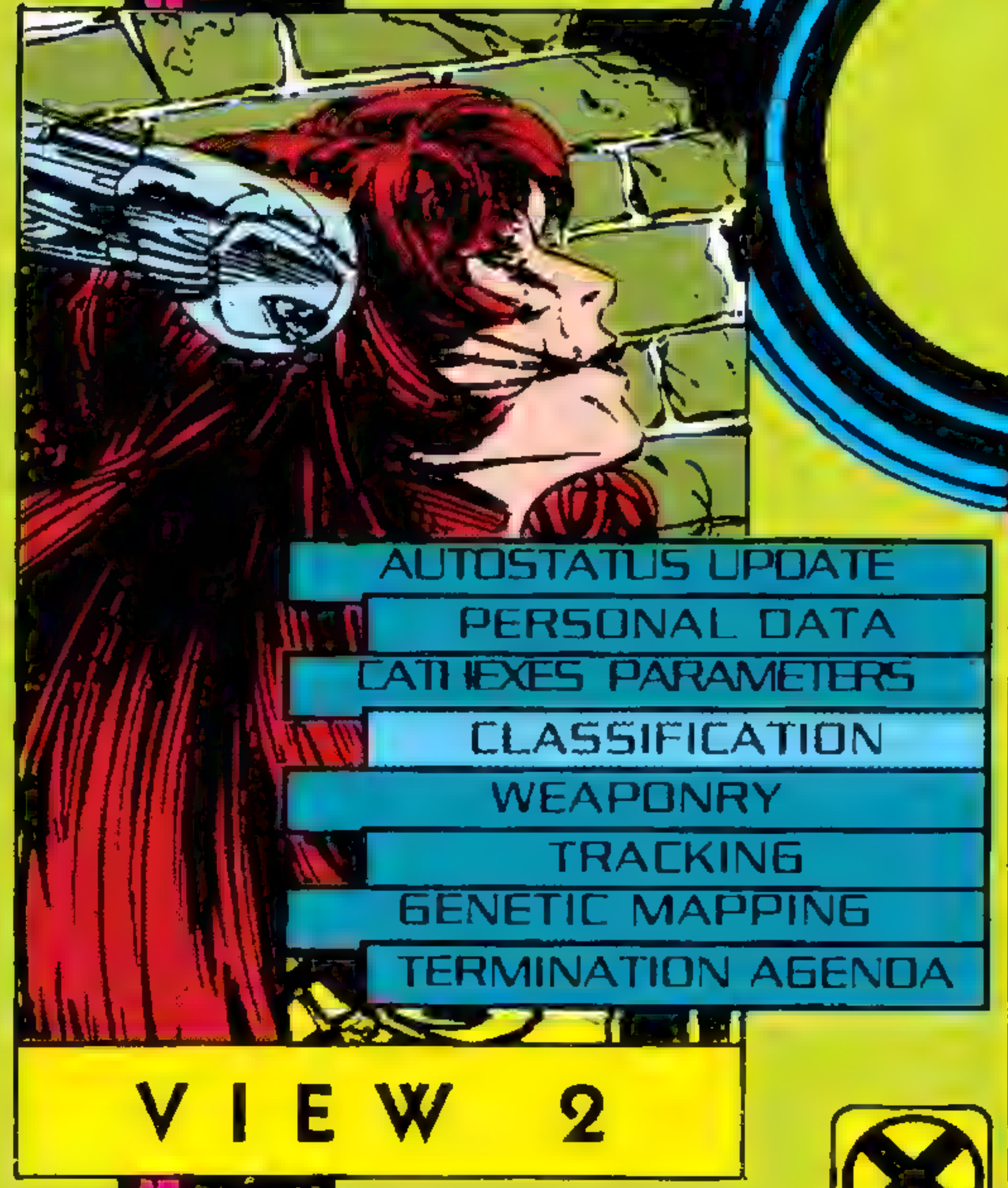
So do I love you or hate you? Do I nurse at your breast or do I tear at your throat? Do I look for you, if I survive the final chorus of my mad song? Upon finding you, do I gaze into your eyes and slay you cold, leave you for dead, or do I ask for the answers to the questions which have torn at me since birth?

Who am I really? Why am I here? What did I do to deserve this life?

Could you give me these answers, Aksani? Would you? I will never be whole until I know.

That is where you have left me, my time-worn mid-wife — on the edge, unable to tread upon either side for fear of falling off the precipice, yet ravaged inside for lack of knowing which way to go.

Thank you, Askani. May you one day pay for what you have done in the name of Xavier's Dream. May you burn for providing that hope to others, while forever denying it to me. . .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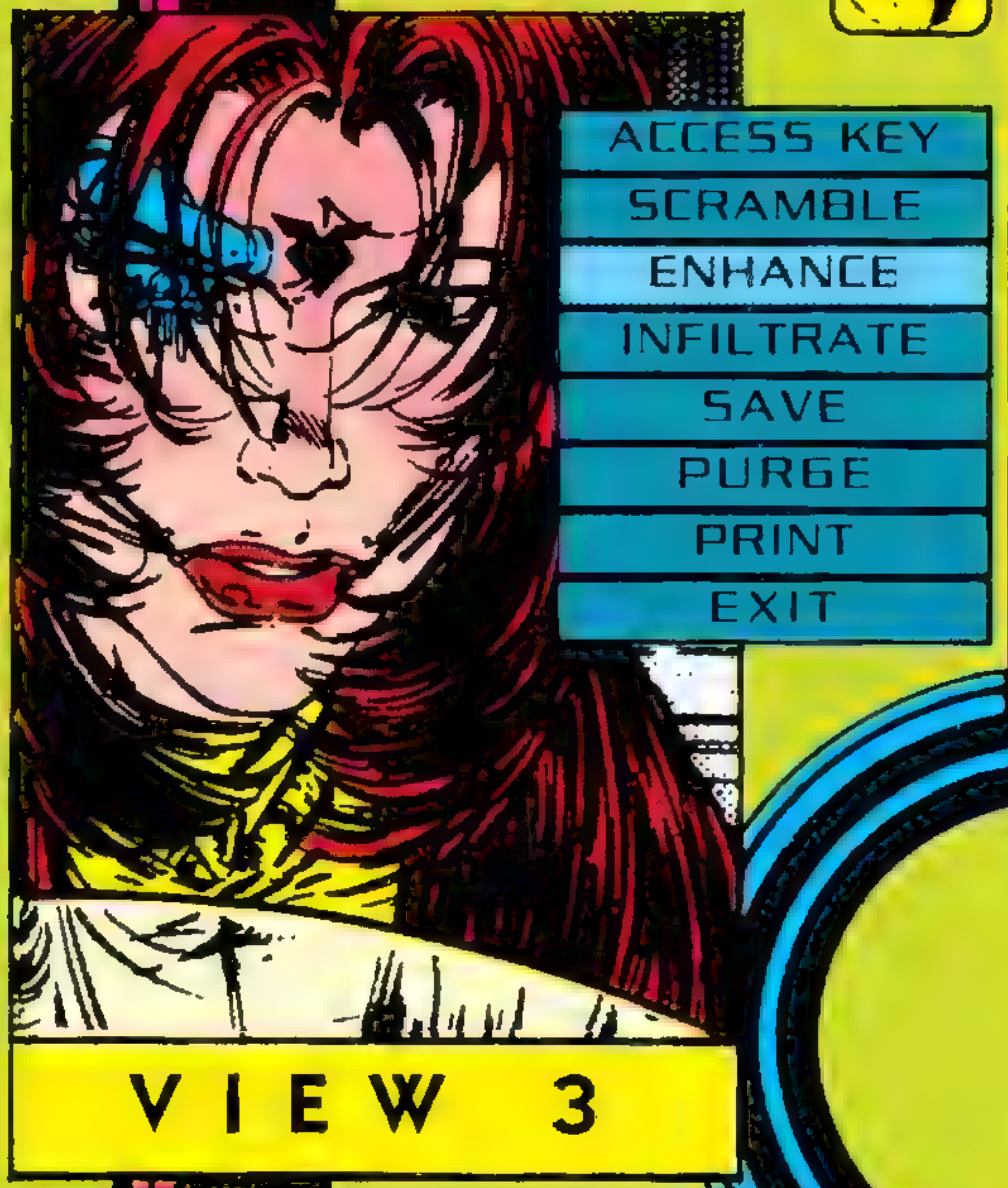
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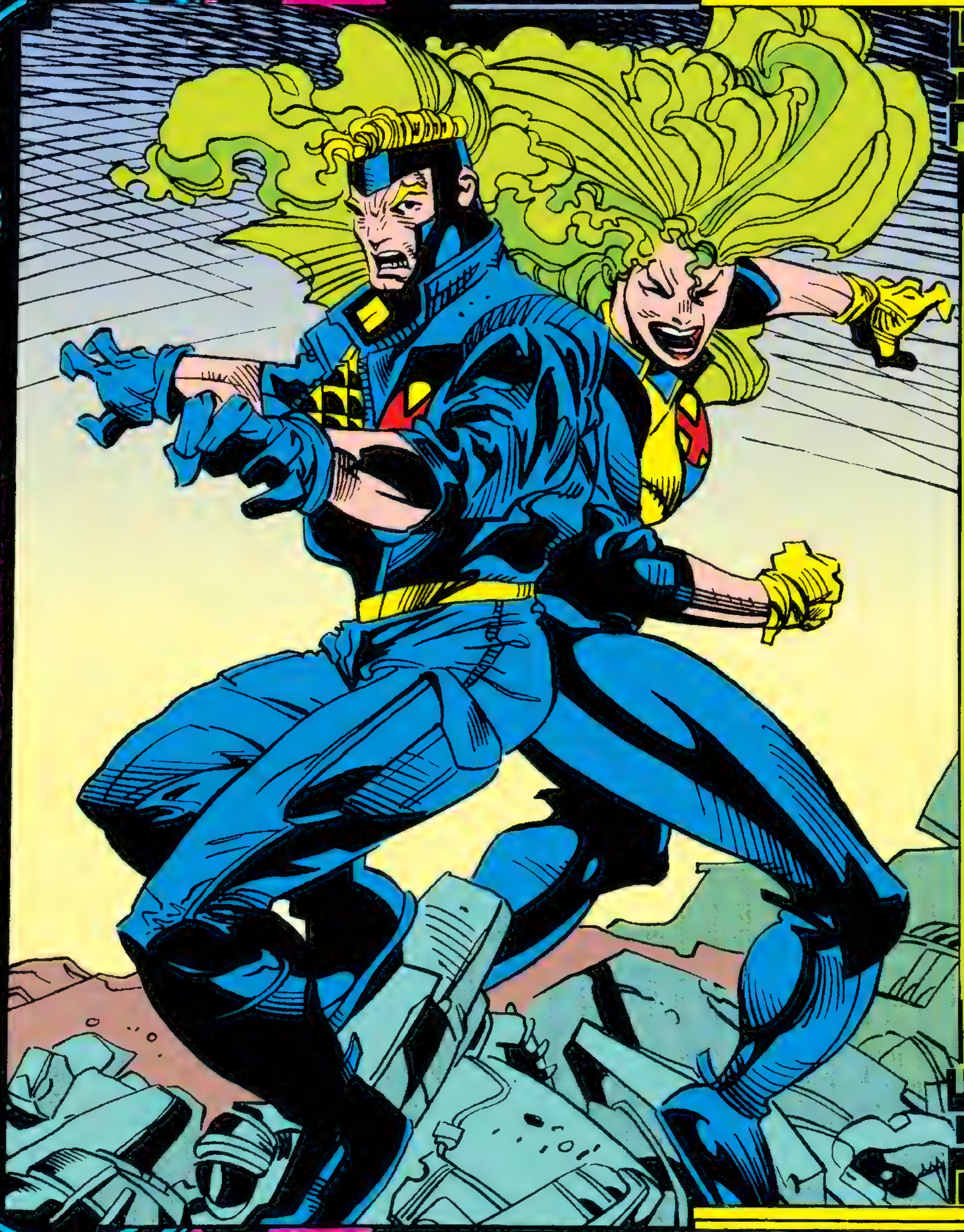

POLARIS & HAVOK Guilt by association. That has always been their clarion call. Never willing to fully participate in the games of the atom, they have nonetheless been dragged kicking and screaming, into the nuclear fires time and again.

They are but the second originators of the mutant salvation. They watch the primaries in acknowledged admiration and muted jealousy.

Does Havok hate Cyclops, I wonder?

Let their wills be forged in the stoking flames of Armageddon. Then we will see what brotherhood is made of. . .in more ways than one.

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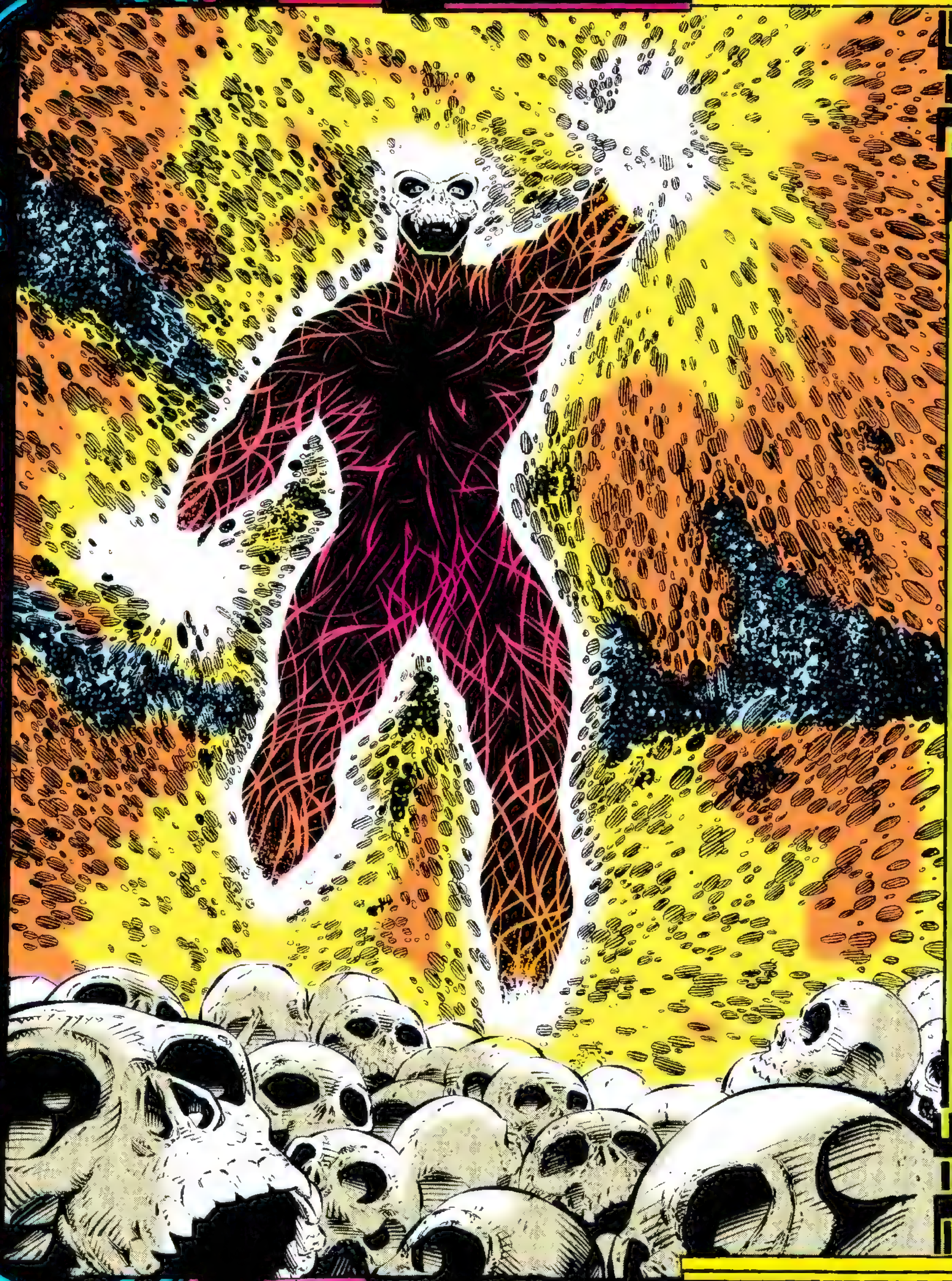


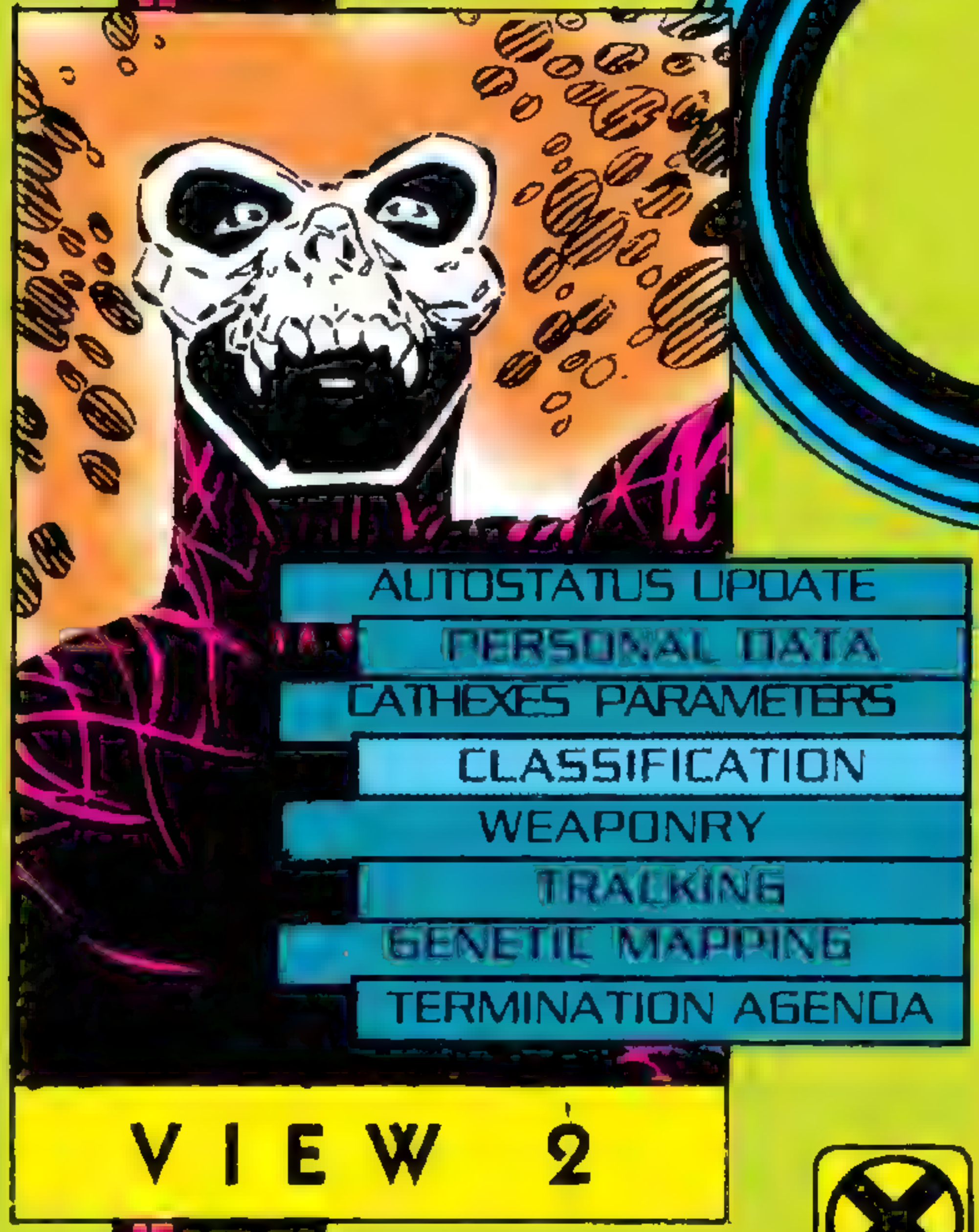
HOLOCAUST Hero? Villain? Anarchist?

How does one classify a mutant who dares to frustrate the Upstarts at dawn, singlehandedly destroys a Sentinel-processing plant at noon, and attempts to slay the X-Men at dusk? According to history discs of this era, the man should not even exist.

Holocaust is the most frustrating of all the mutants currently under observation, because his methods have yet to reveal his motivation. He does not speak, his thoughts are cloaked even to me, and his mutant powers seem to adapt to any given situation ...and therein, one suspects, lies the means to his defeat.

The name implies his goal is the systematic destruction of all life on the planet Earth—indiscriminate of whether that life be human or mutant.

If that is indeed his intent...he had better hurry, for the legacy awaits.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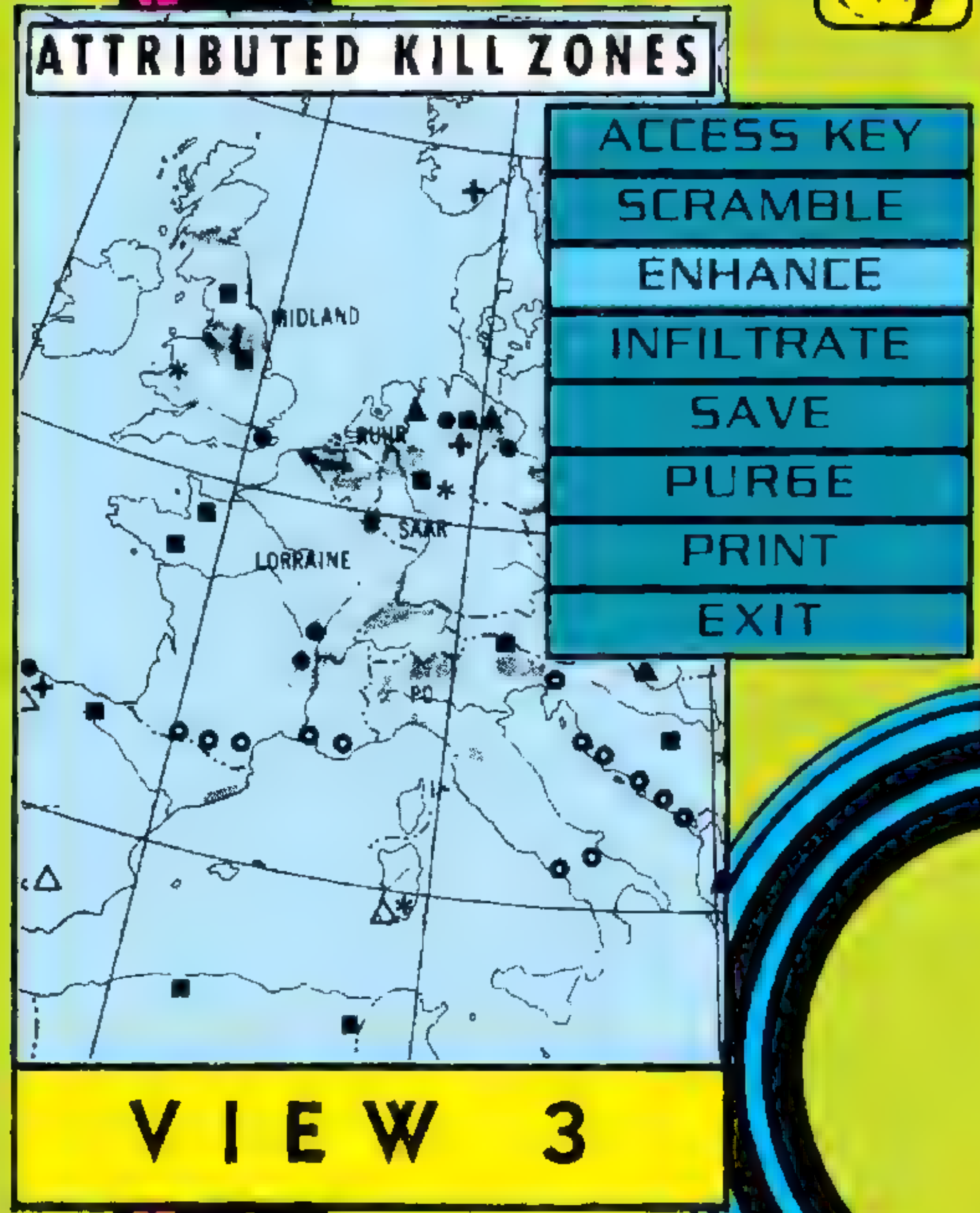
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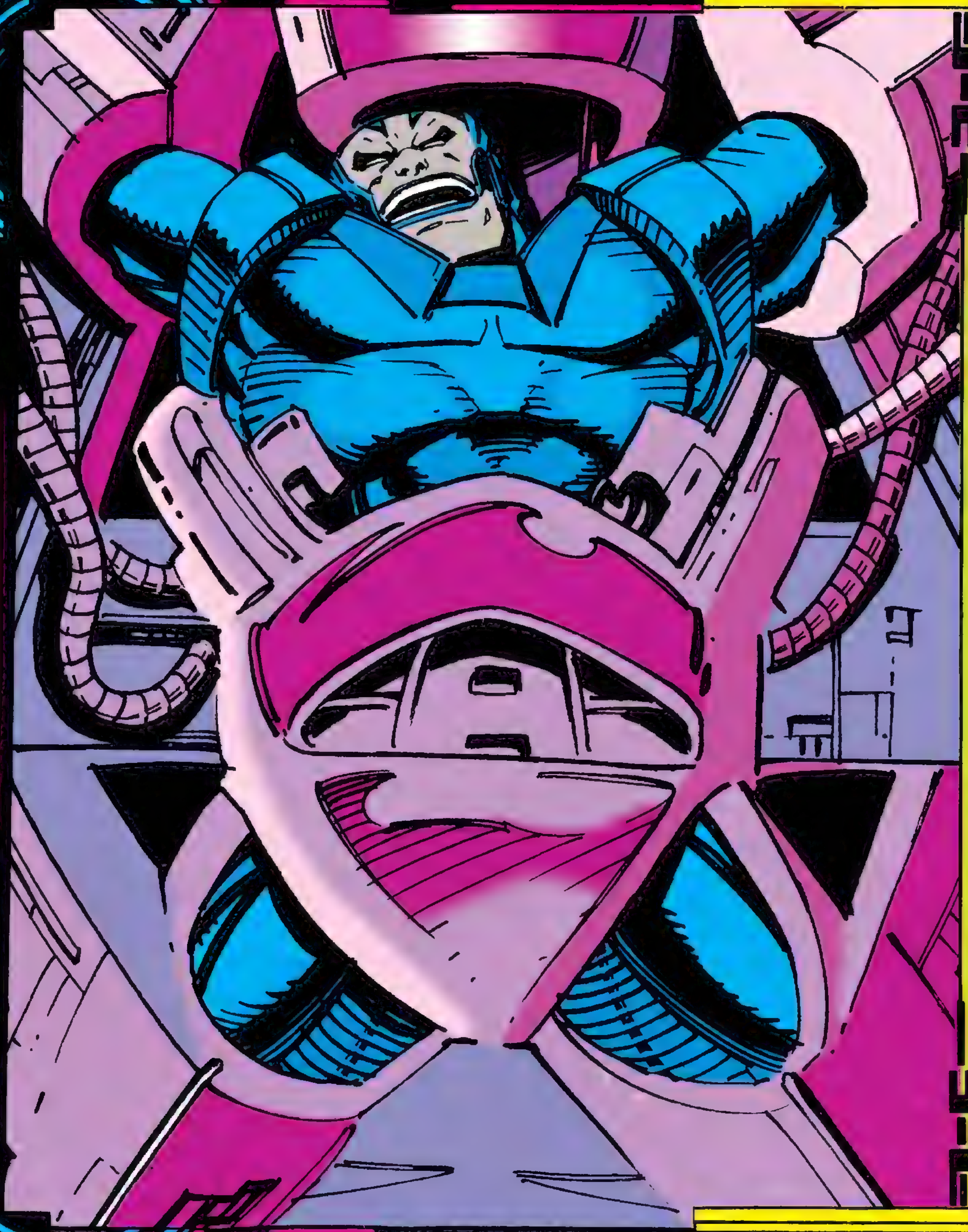
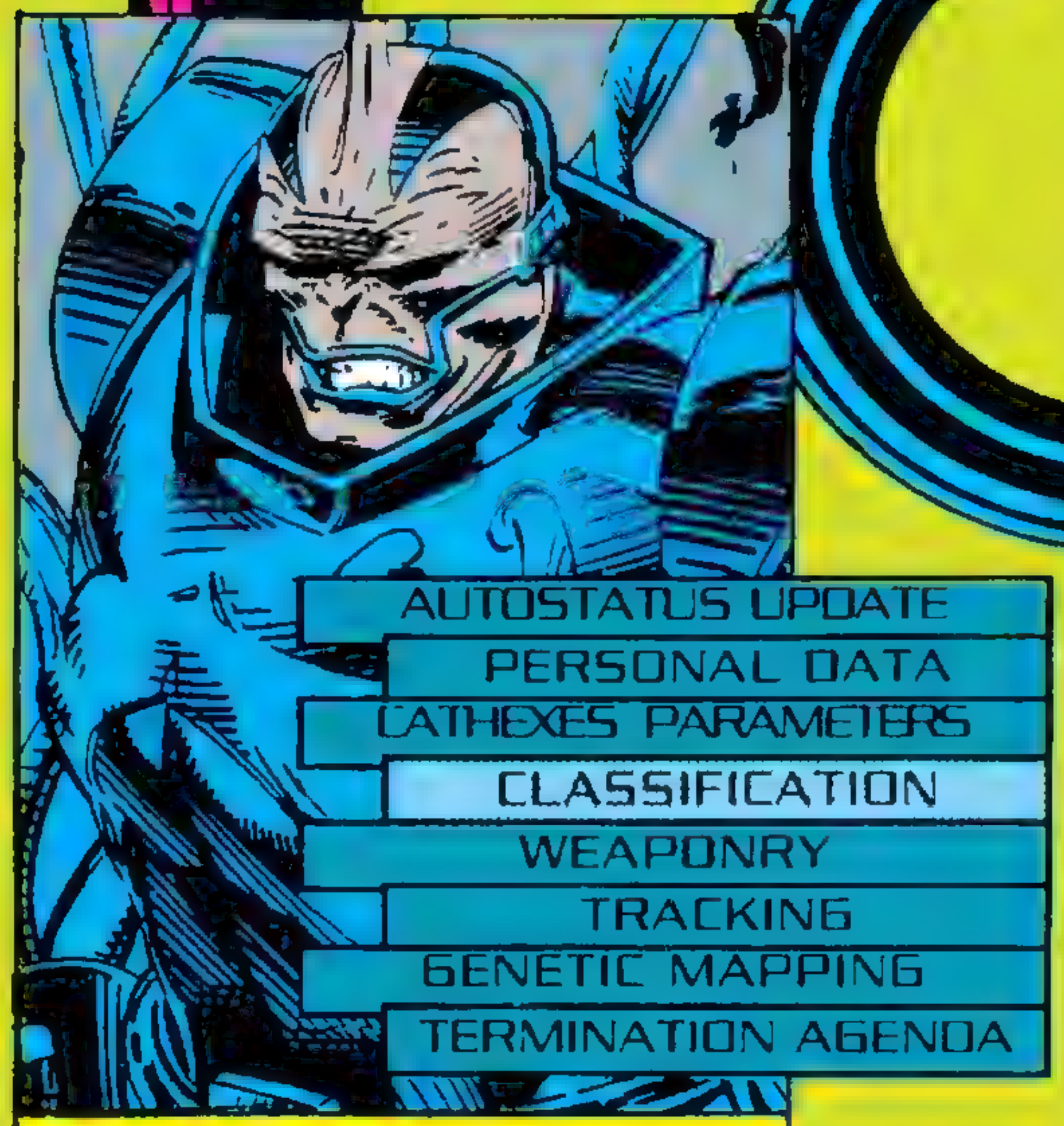


APOCALYPSE It will be a river of blood which spills between us, master of the forever past. And it will be your ancient, congealed, dry-caked ichor which will splatter the landscape like dry heat, washing me down in its dusty tears of time.

When you fall, Apocalypse. . .when your withered hand reaches out for mercy. . .when the master of the forever past asks for help. . .that is when the circle between us will be complete.

When you will be as helpless before me as I once was before you.

And you will be given in return, what you gave in kind. Nothing but scorn. It is, as you are so fond of always pointing out, survival of the fittest. Let's see which one of us survives.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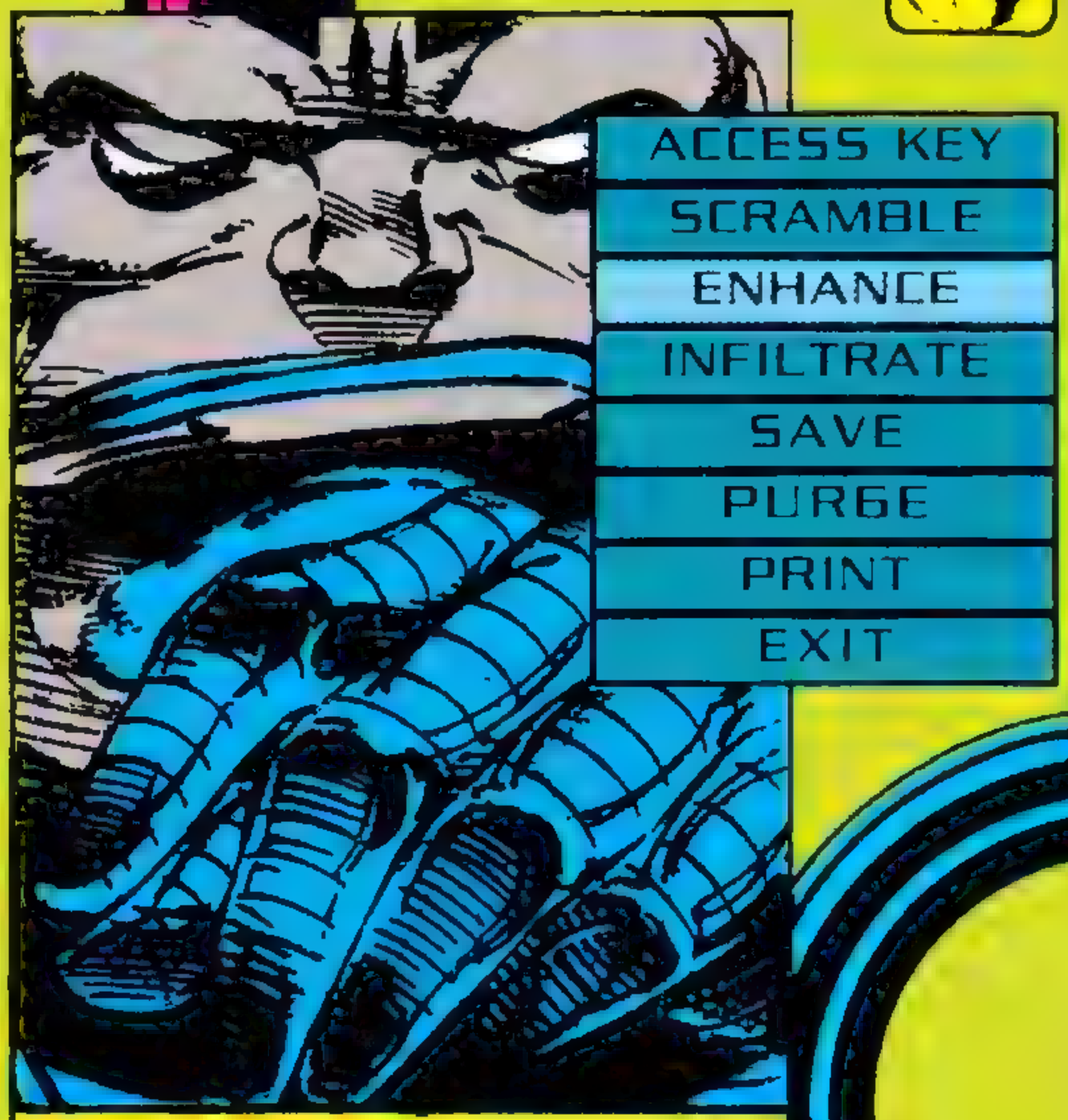
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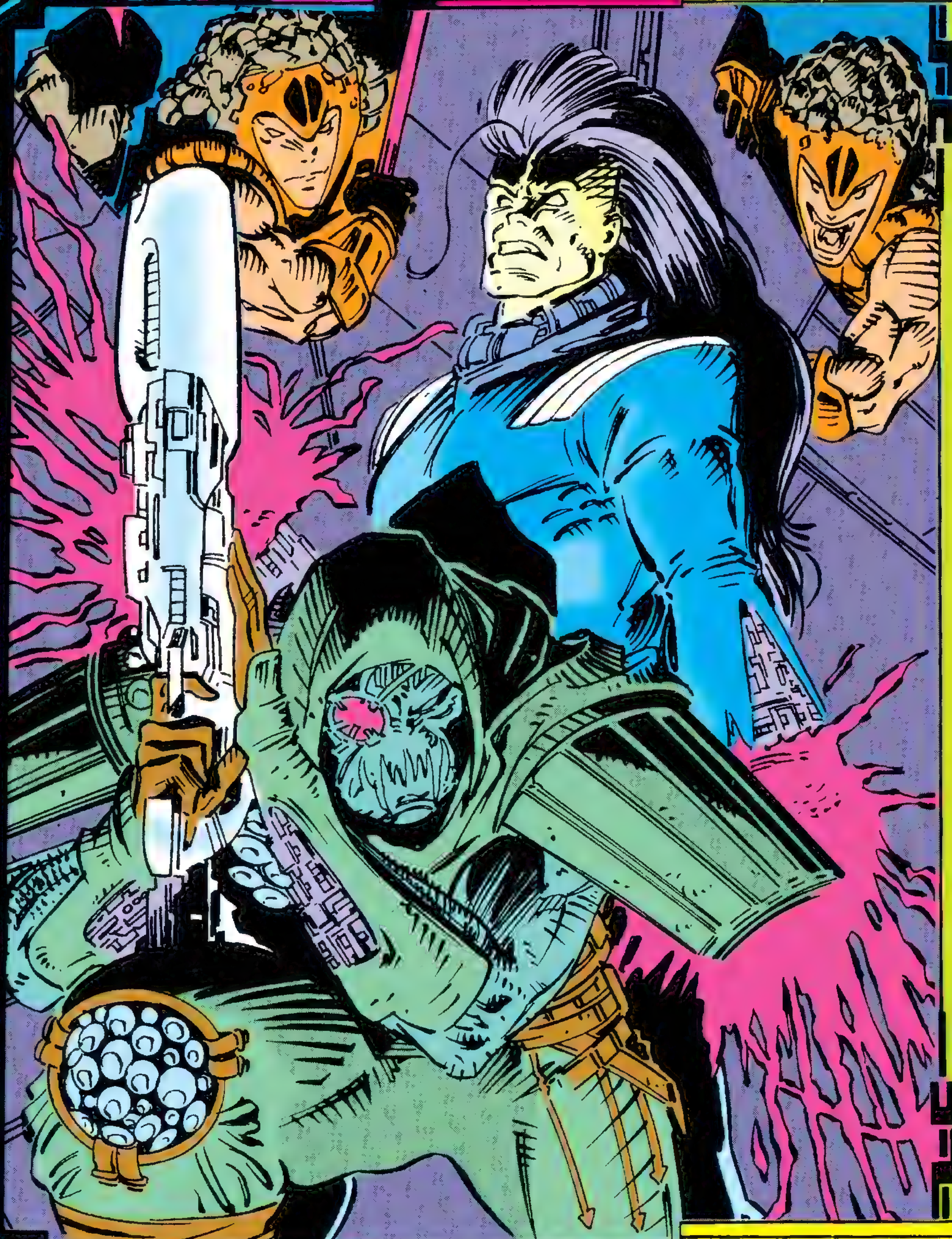

DARK RIDERS Play with fire, expect to get burned. Of the many children Apocalypse has littered on the planet like so much flotsam, the Dark Riders were but another attempt to create a group of followers true to their creator's credo: survival of the fittest.

But what if the creator does not qualify for his cherished religion? What do the pupils do then?

Of all the games I play, this one is the smallest, but the most enjoyable. What do the Dark Riders do when they realize I am more fit than Apocalypse?

They ride the fiery waves of superiority and burn the weak to ash. And with that tidal flow, their master is scattered to the winds of tomorrow's fates.

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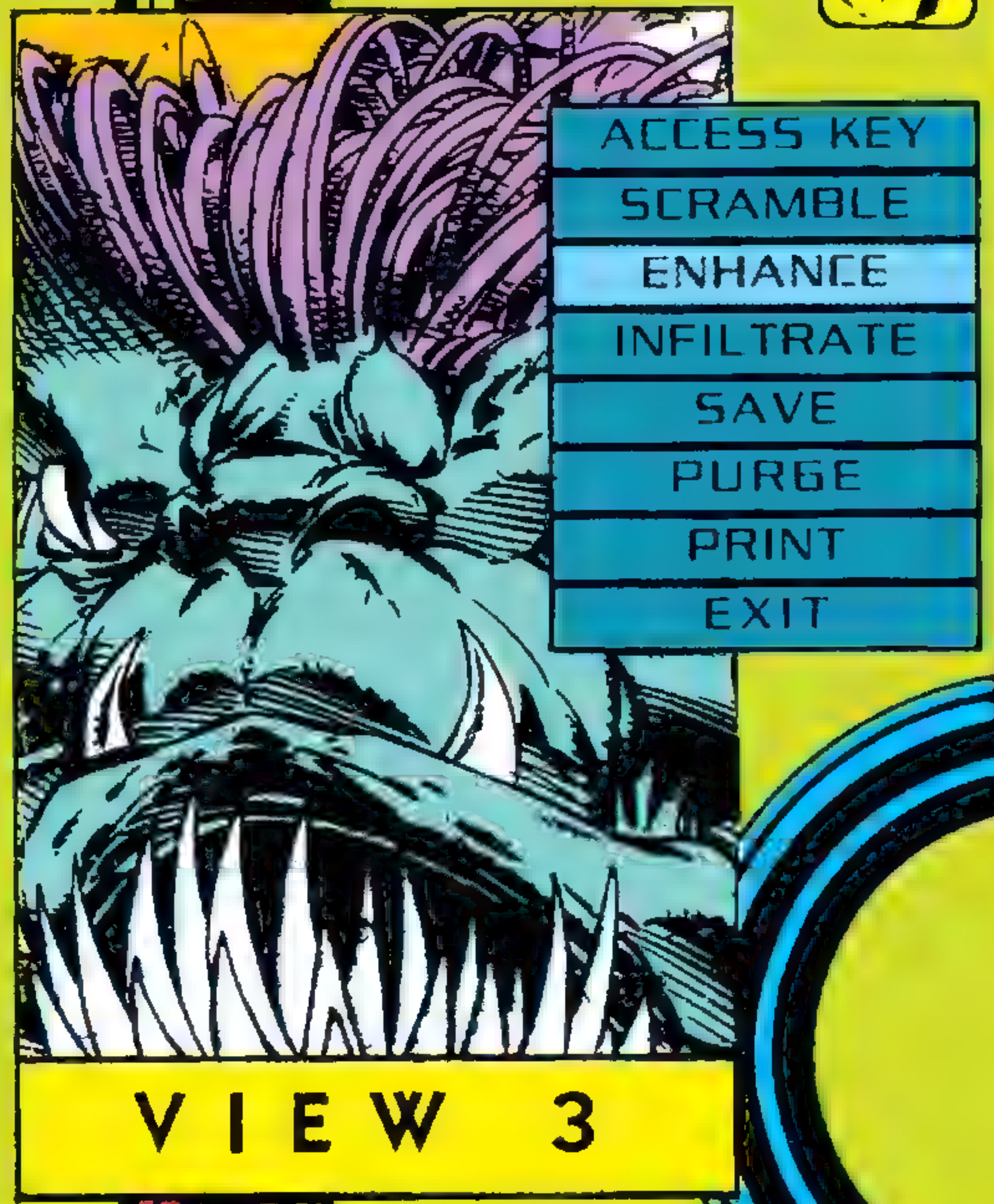
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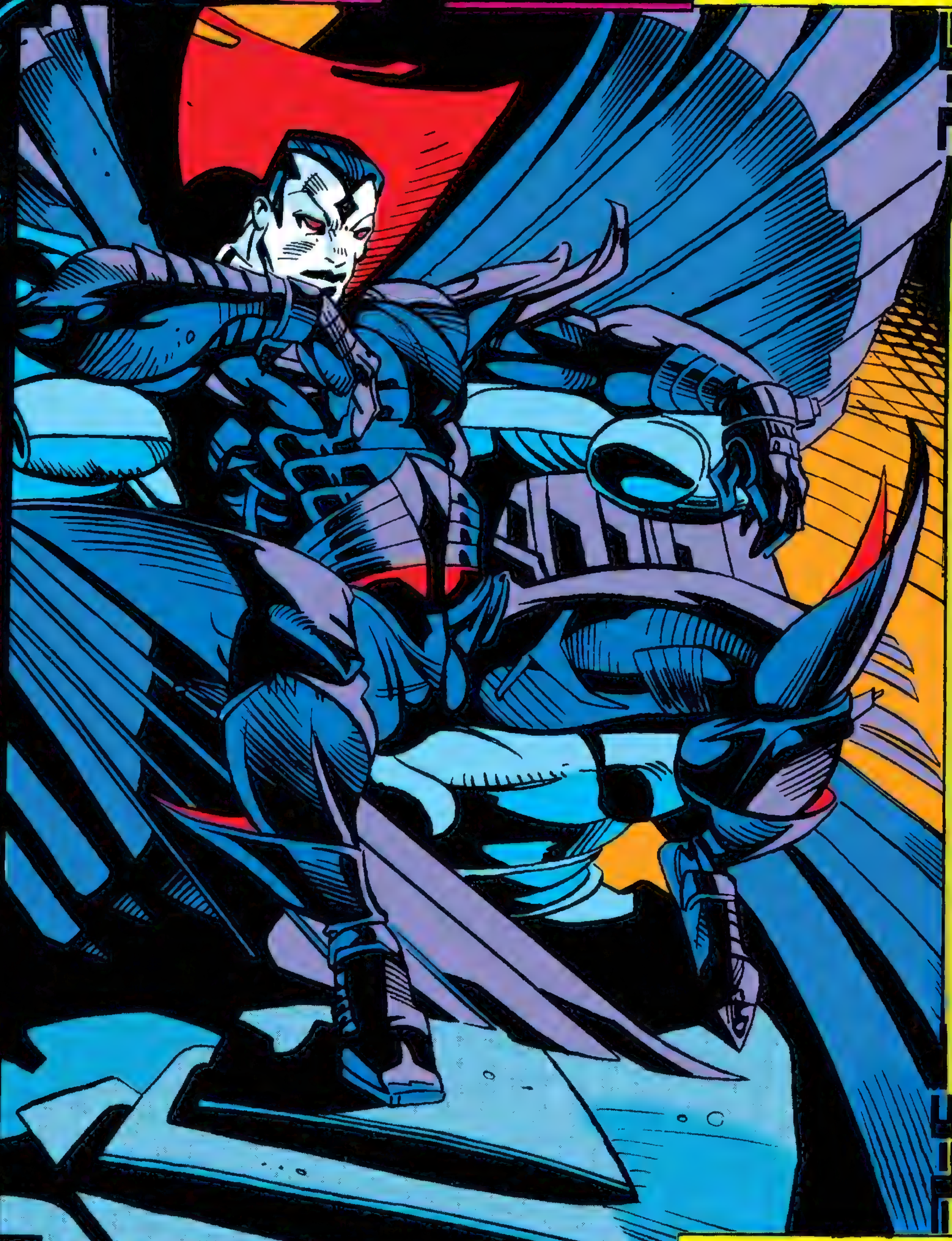


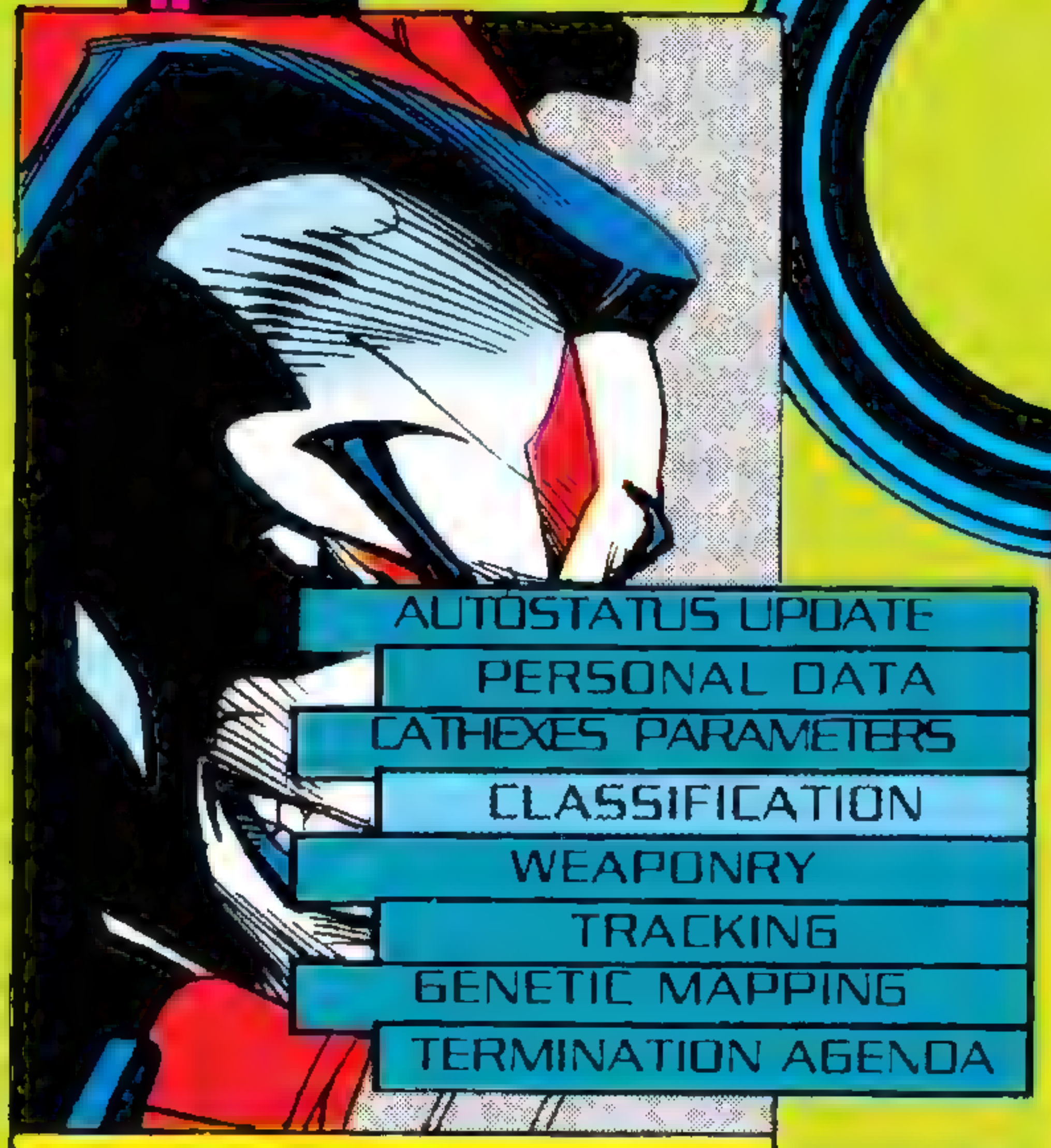
MR. SINISTER How does one put into words the purity of a lifelong hatred?

How can mere words suffice when live-wire, jagged-carved, open-fleshed nerves ignite sparks of tension at the sight and sound of his name?

Would that I could allow you inside my mind for but the briefest of time. Indeed, you are the architect of my body and soul, the sculptor of my sins.

Sinister, the patron of my masterpiece, I leave with you a pure reflection of that work. I leave you with your heart's greatest desire — I leave you with the foundation of life and death. I leave you with what you left me — a lifetime of guilt, self-hatred, confusion and despair.

Enjoy...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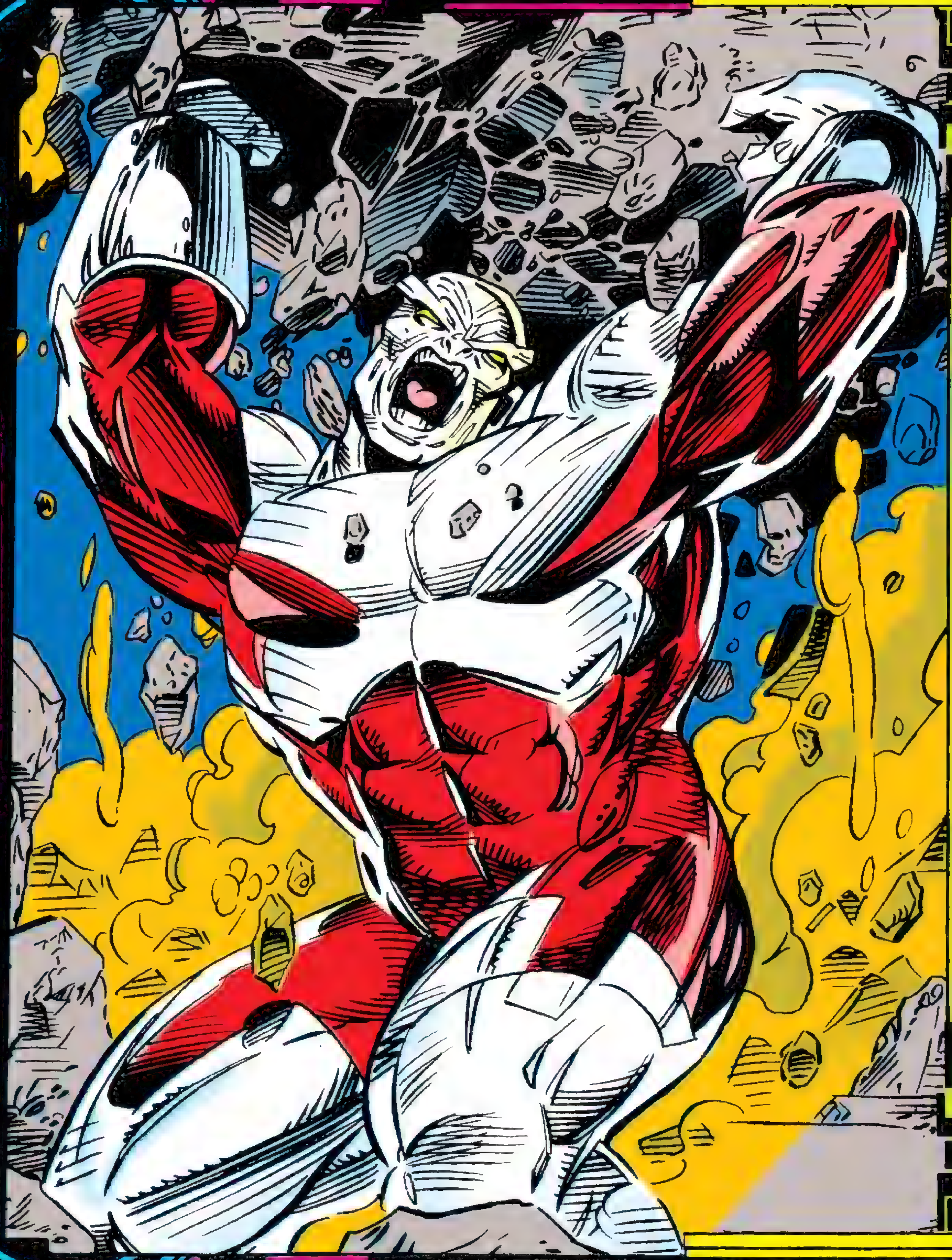
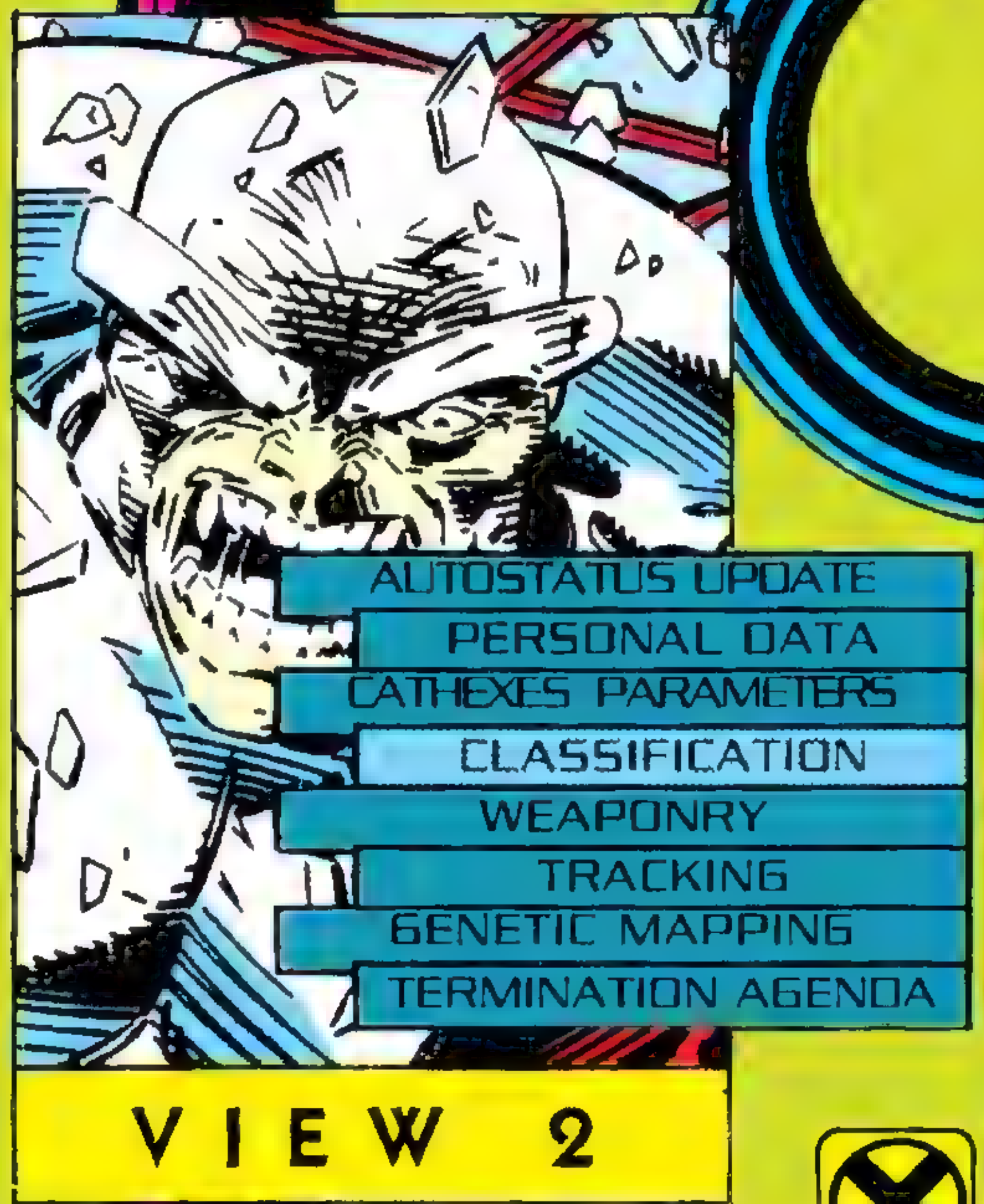


CALIBAN My blind hound-dog, unleashed into the darkness of his very despair. So desperate to gain the approval of his many masters is my stumbling retriever, that he would naively bite the hands that feed him, as well as those which discipline him.

With the carrot dangling before his jaundiced eyes, what will the hound do?

What is to become of this gentle soul, torn asunder by his overwhelming need for acceptance? What is to become of Caliban when he learns he's been coerced into consigning to death's domain two of the few who would have accepted him into their lives without preconditions?

Why, he will despair, wither and die, one could only hope. . .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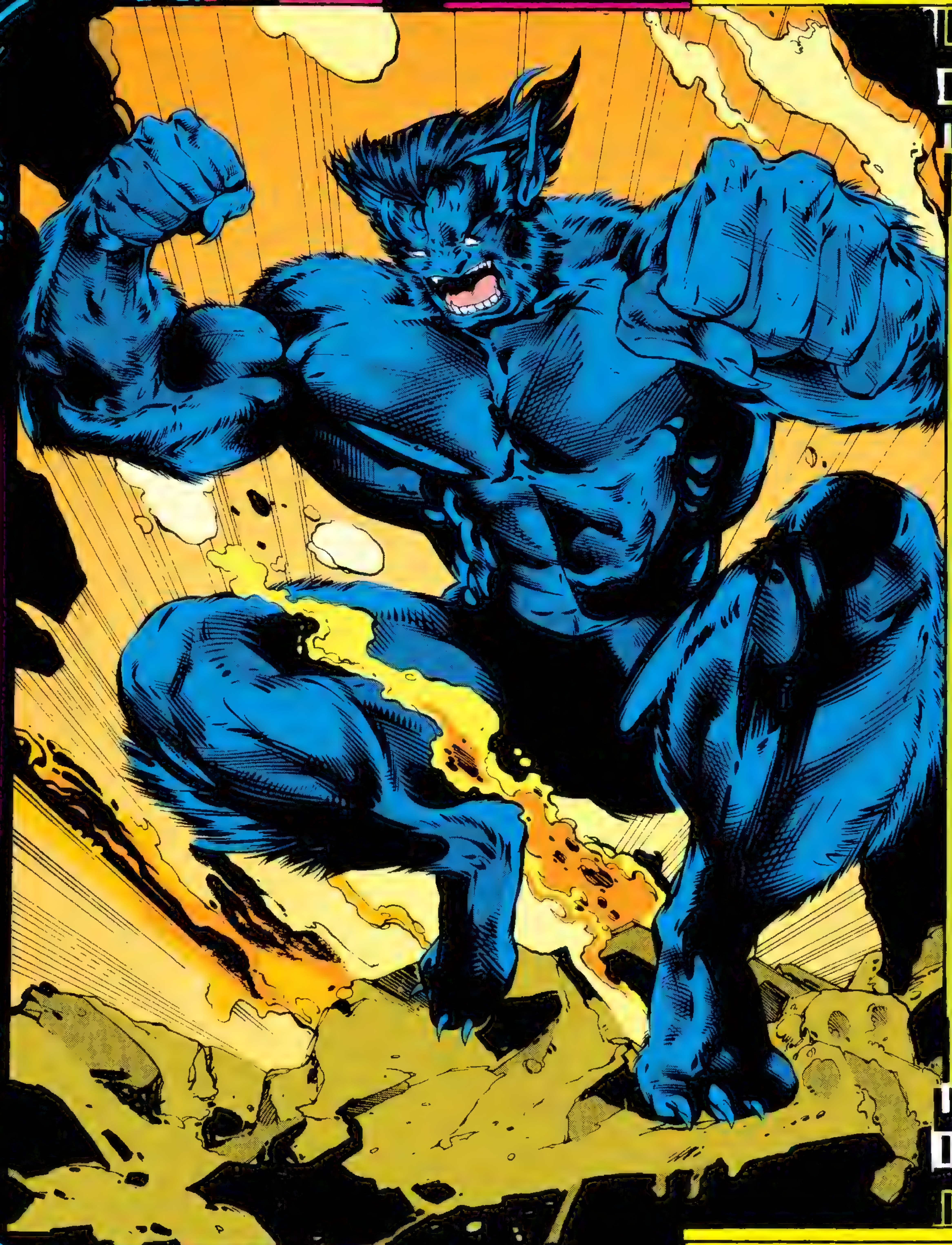


BEAST Play the part of the fool no more, Hank McCoy. Masquerade the fop no longer. It is time to come out of your self-imposed erudite shell of tomfoolery and banality. Let the mind of the beast come out. Let the molecular chess player play a game with me. It is time you found out what the man inside the animal is all about.

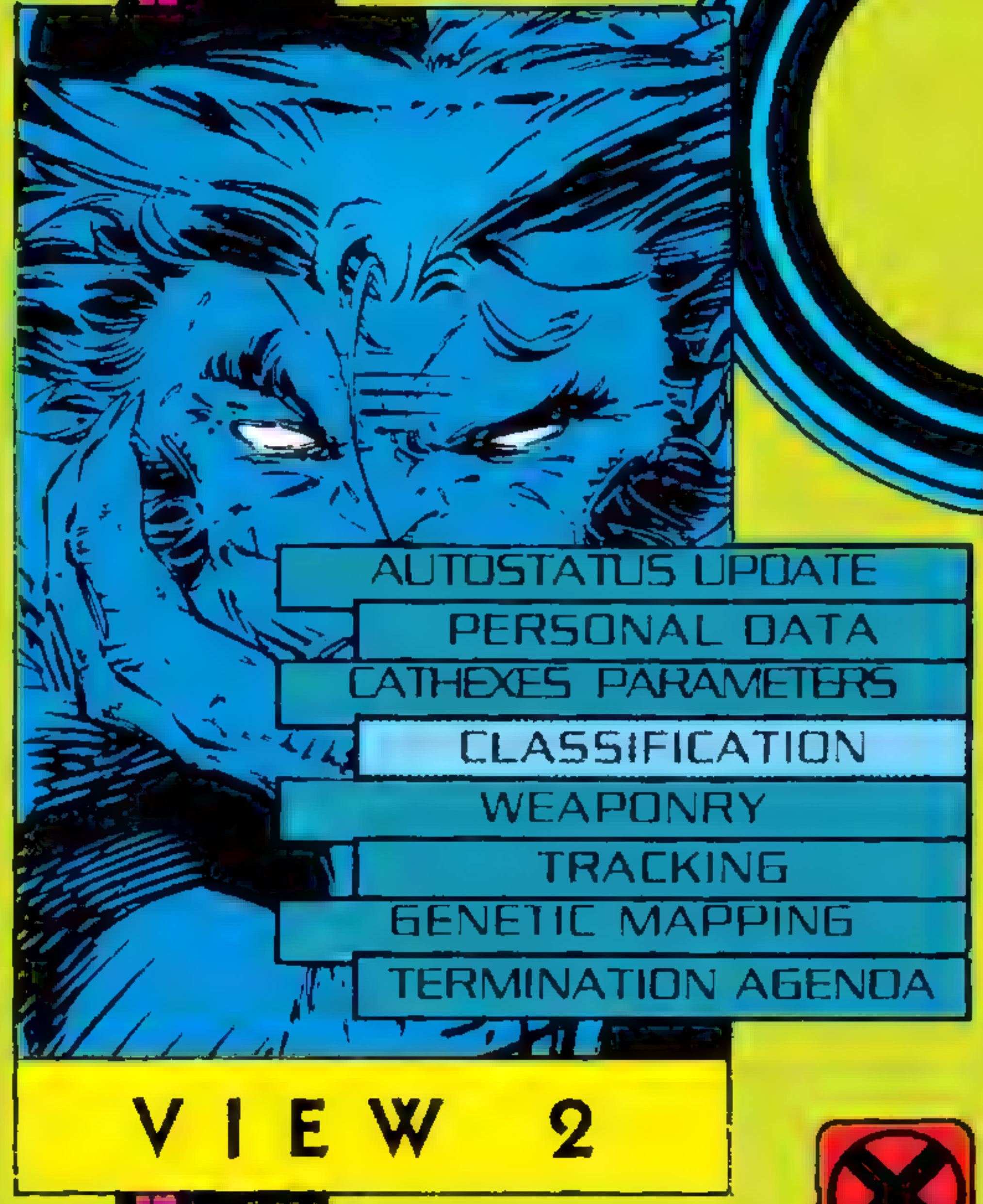
If anything, my legacy, while bringing out the worst in your brothers and sisters, will bring out the best in you. Put the idiot savant aside. Stop pretending to be the circus clown one moment, the over-loquacious intellectual the next. It is time now to be the man you have always wanted to be.

I leave you no choice, McCoy.

If you do not grow up and assume the responsibility which is now yours, the entire mutant race could be wiped out.

What a burden that would be. Could you continue to laugh while the world cries the way they have laughed as you cried?

Such a twist of fate, that the blanket of security you have erected around yourself must be tossed aside in order to achieve your fullest potential. What will the real Beast show the world?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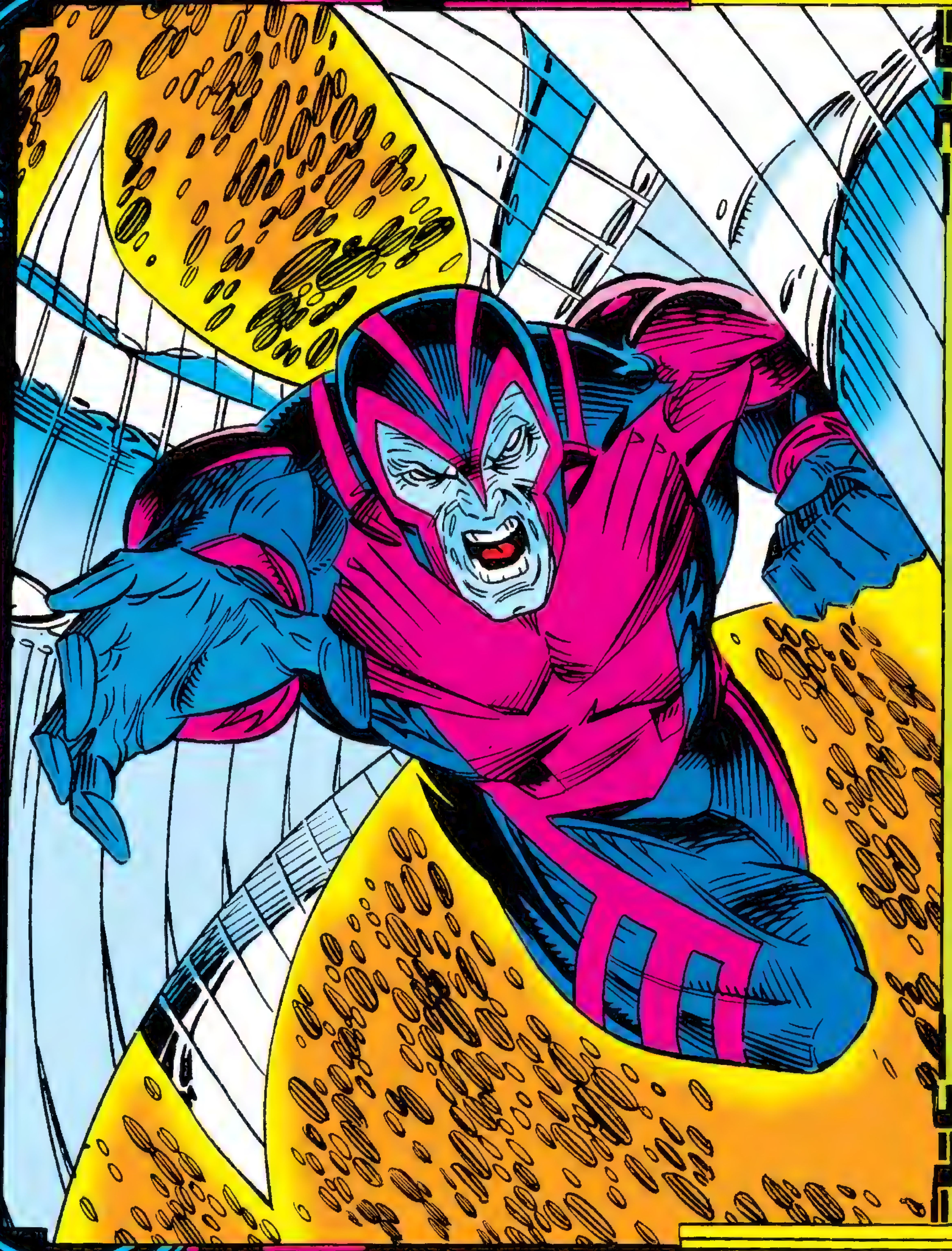


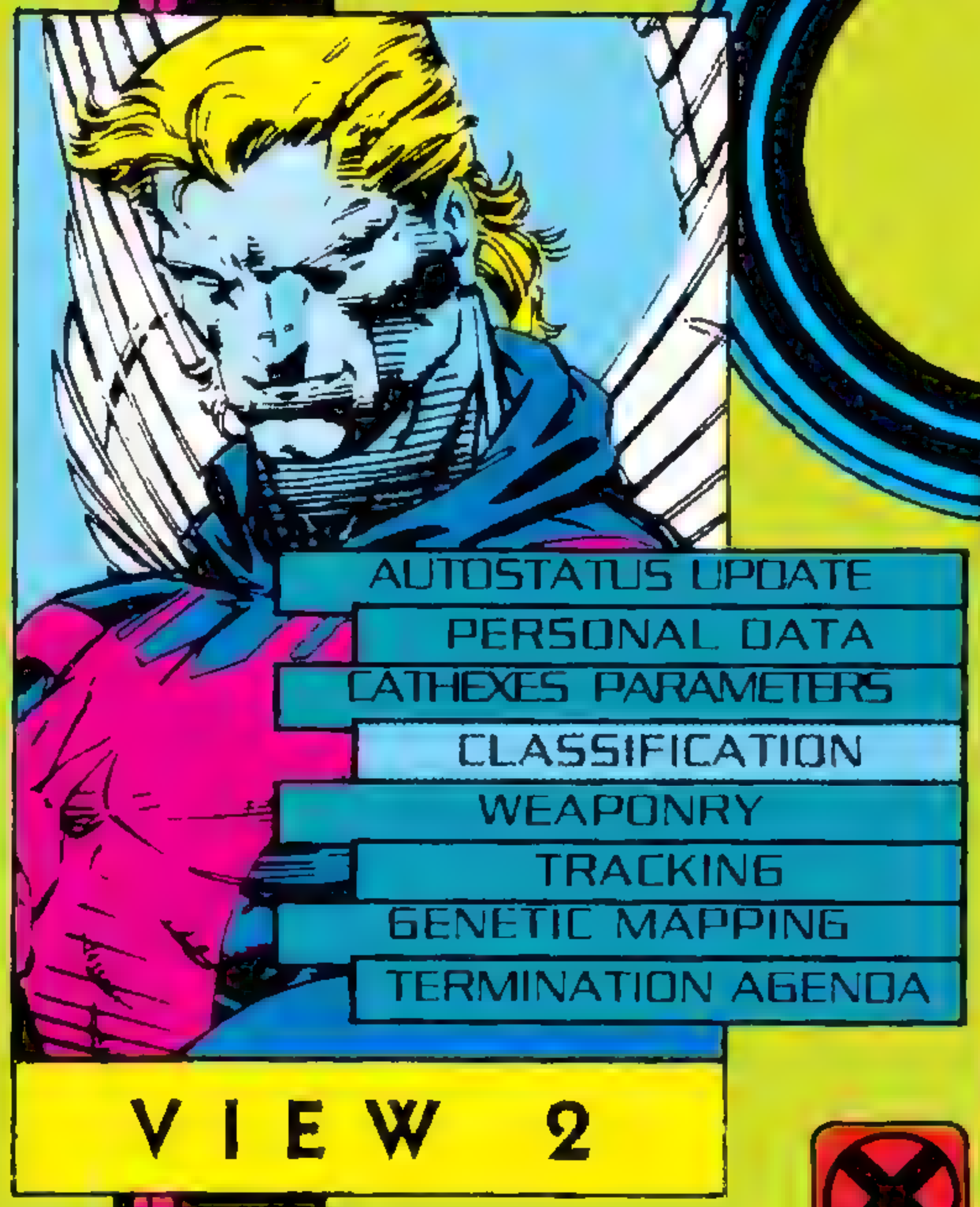
ARCHANGEL Which Warren Worthington will come out to play tonight? Upright and moral protector of mutantkind or self-deluded avenging angel of death?

It comes down to a matter of which side of the coin Warren wishes would land face up.

I hold the shiny silver quarter, it catches the devil's light just so. It teases and tantalizes you with the hint of treasures to come. You take it in your cold, hard fingers. I show you where to toss it. Apocalypse is the playing field. You smile.

The coin goes up, twisting and turning in mid air, not unlike a gentle bird caught in a swirling tornado of lust and desperation.

It lands, spinning light playing off your eyes. . .What does it come up, Warren? Which will it be?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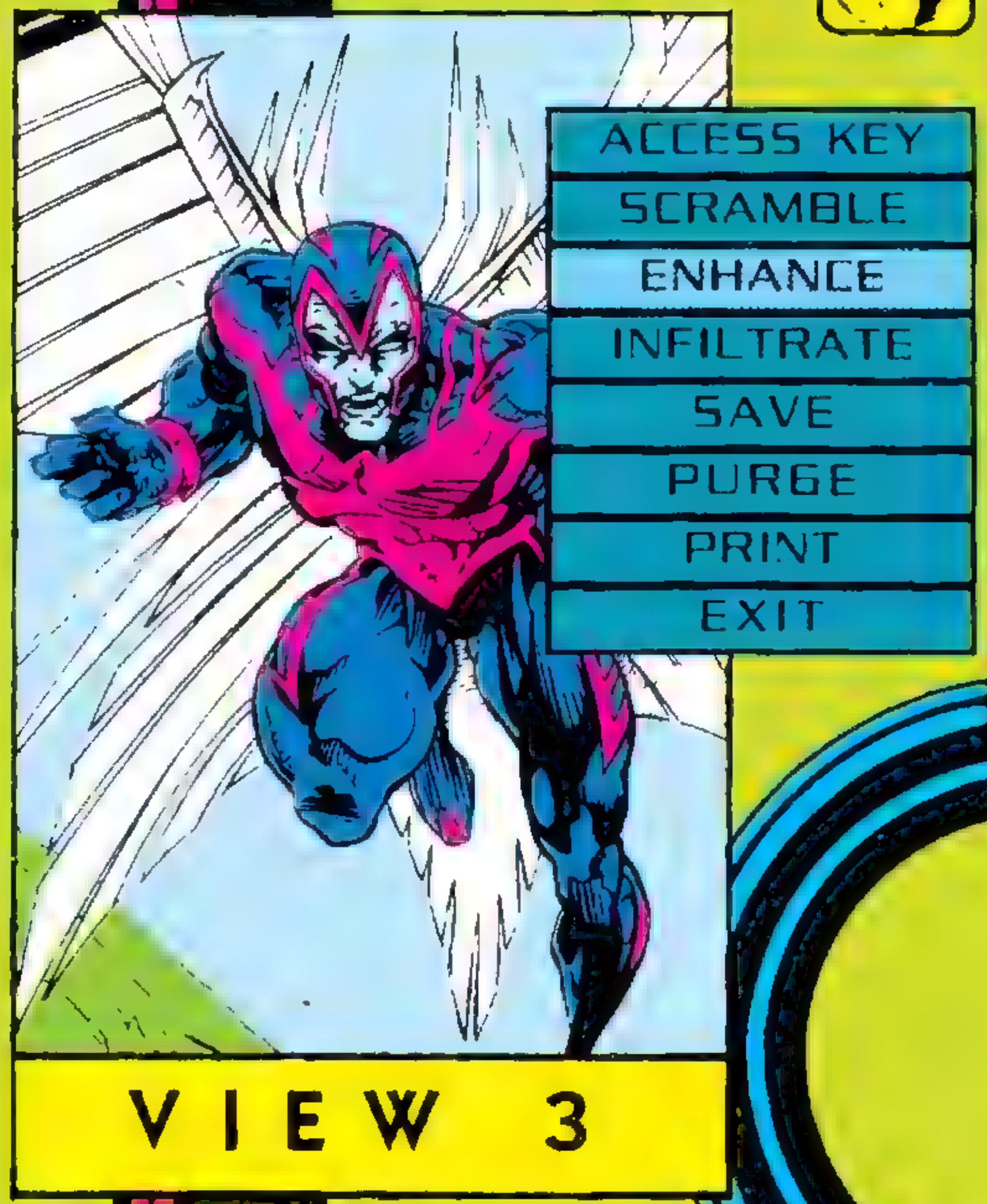
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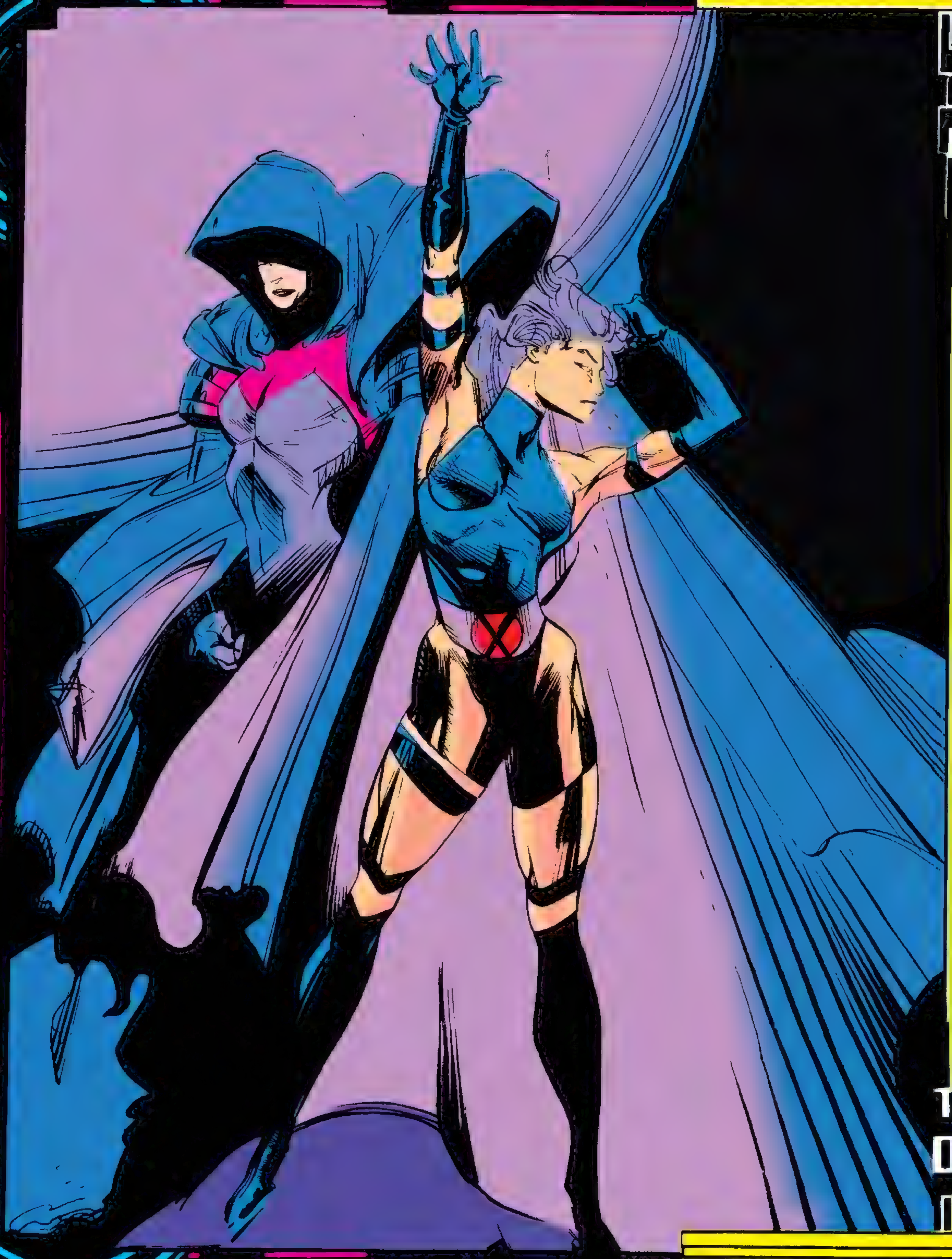


PSYLOCKE/BETSY BRADDOCK

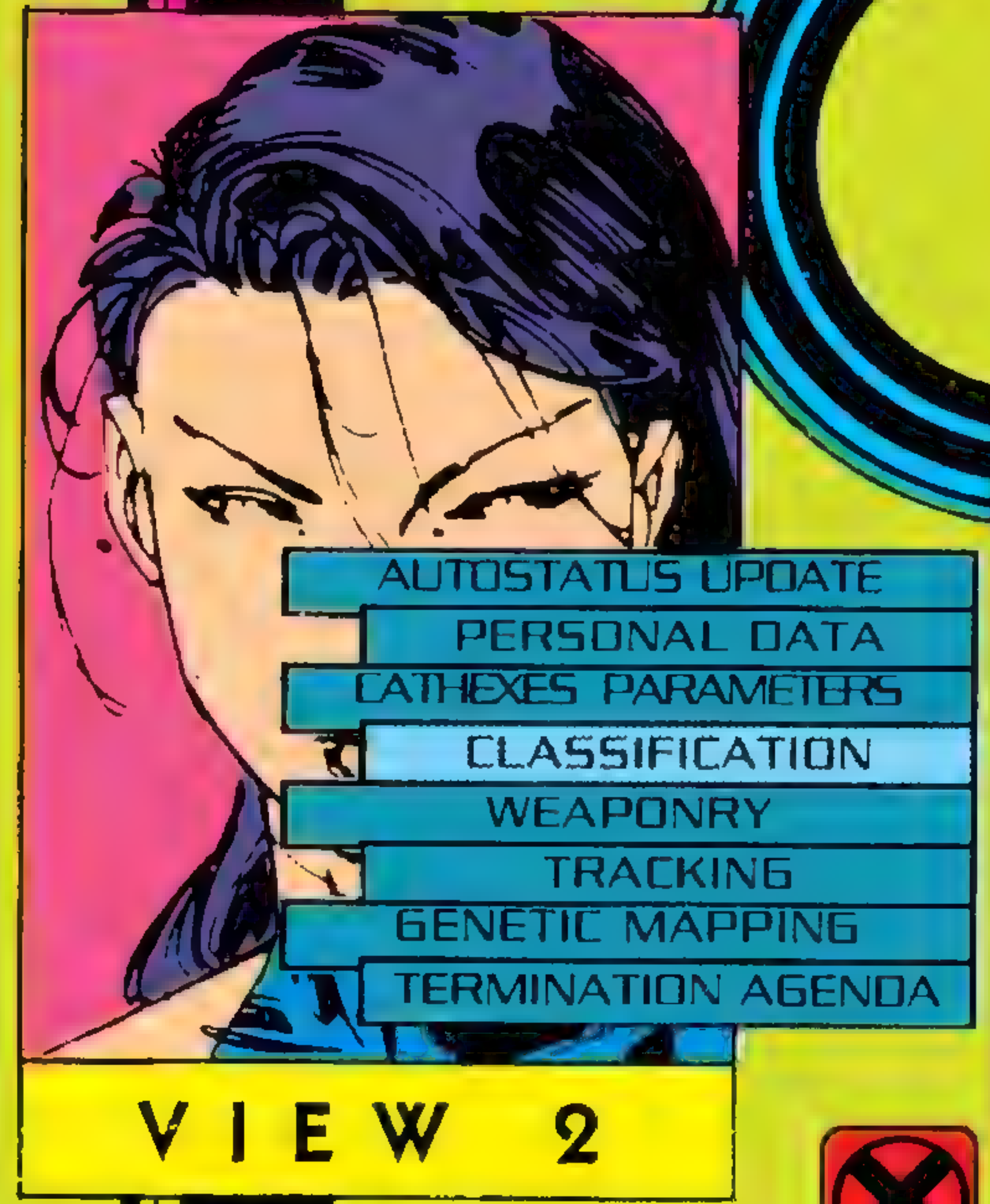
The forthright, uptight, proper British maiden has been turned into a finely-tuned killing machine. The woman whose heritage and upbringing crafted carefully constructed walls of reserve and superiority around her, now finds herself able to approach anyone — physically and mentally — from the inside as well as the out.

What happened to this paragon of English virtue? How did she turn into a fiery dragon of the night? Transformed by the manipulations of others, she now, in turn, manipulates.

But to what purpose? What hides beneath those shadowy eyes? What angers flare? What passions smolder? How does Elisabeth Braddock *really* feel about the changes she has undergone? How could anyone know, when they haven't bothered to ask her? How could she know, when she hasn't seemed to consider the changes too carefully.

How odd, that an ice telepath, someone so capable and willing to cut to the core of other people's minds, is so unable to probe her own.

Would that these blithely blind children begin to ask questions — of her and of themselves, because if they wait too long, they might not find the answers to their liking. . .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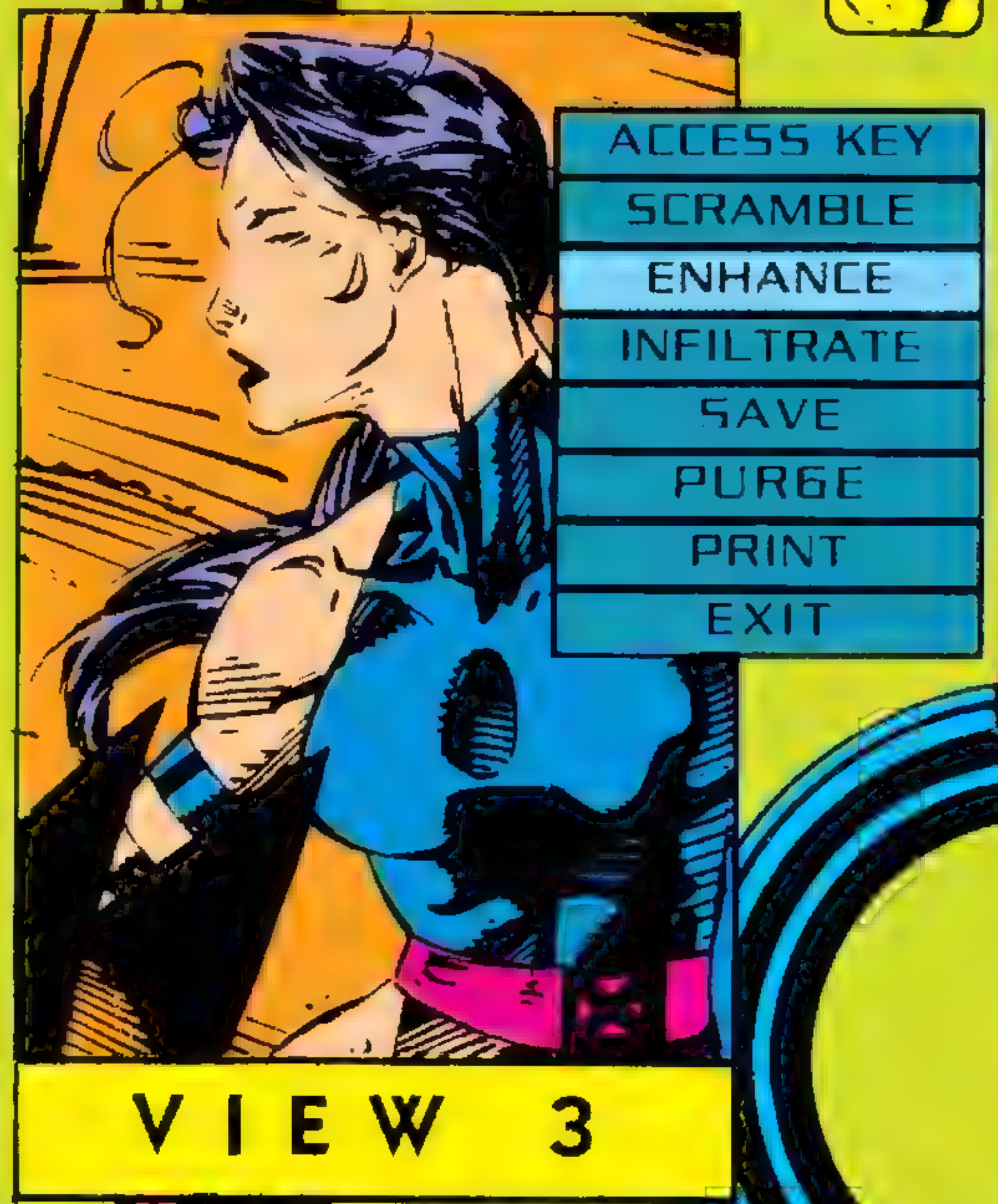
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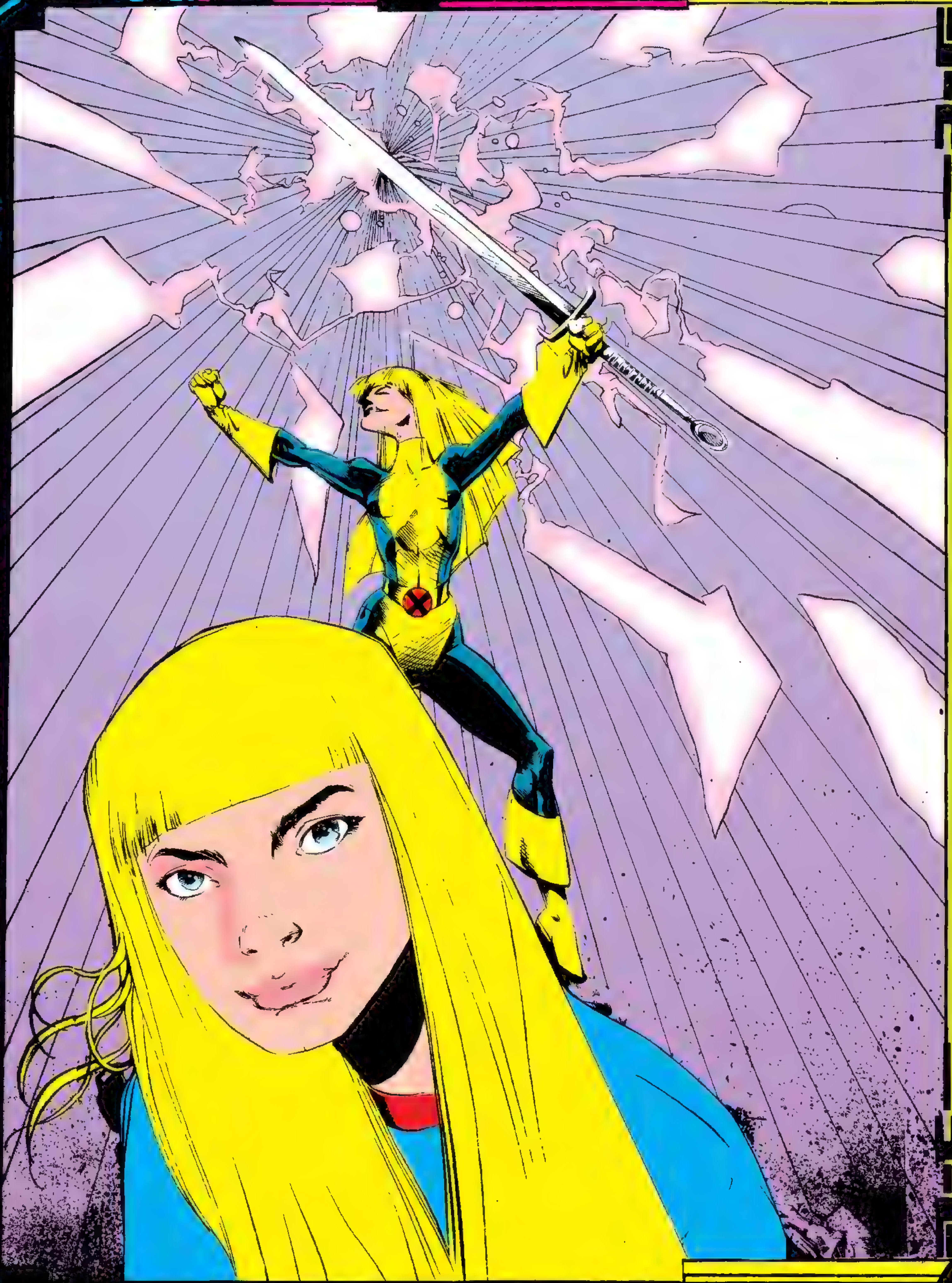


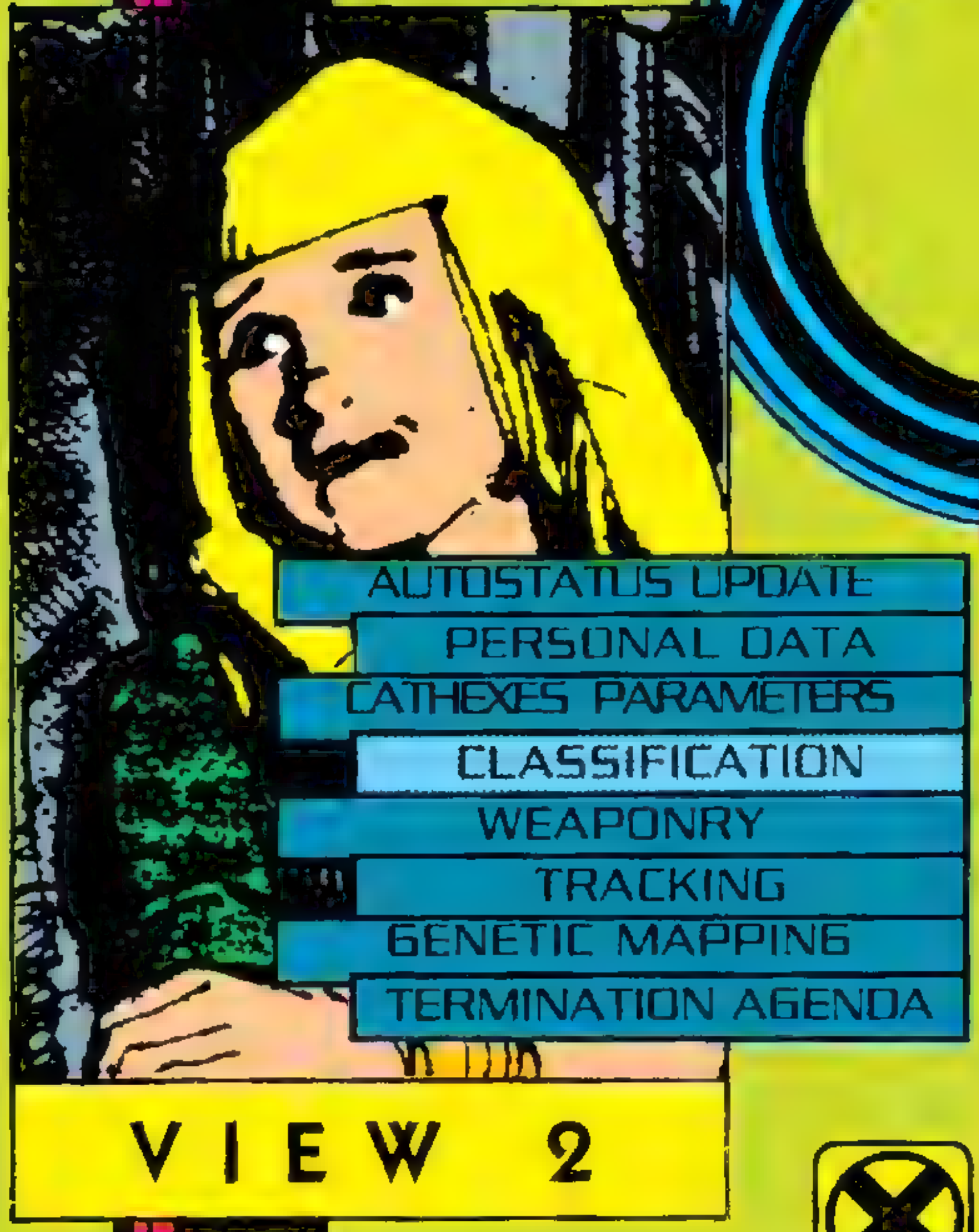
ILLYANA Child of innocence, demon of hate. Smiling girl in a field, frenzied teen in a war zone. A flower in her fingers, a sword in her hand. Illyana Rasputin, Darkchilde Magik. Little girl, mutant sorceress.

What a combination.

A creature who has seen more of time from both sides of the unending path than I ever could hope to. She has lived then and now, here and there. Earth present, past and future. Limbo never-where, forevernow.

What would her future bring? What would the onset of puberty trigger? Would little Illyana become a teleporting mutant in the care of the children of the atom, or a demoness apprentice in a nether-region even the denizens of Hell fear to mention?

In time, one would find out. But time is something not everyone has much of. No matter the age, no matter the desire. My legacy may strike anyone born of mutant blood. From the oldest of the old…to the youngest of the young…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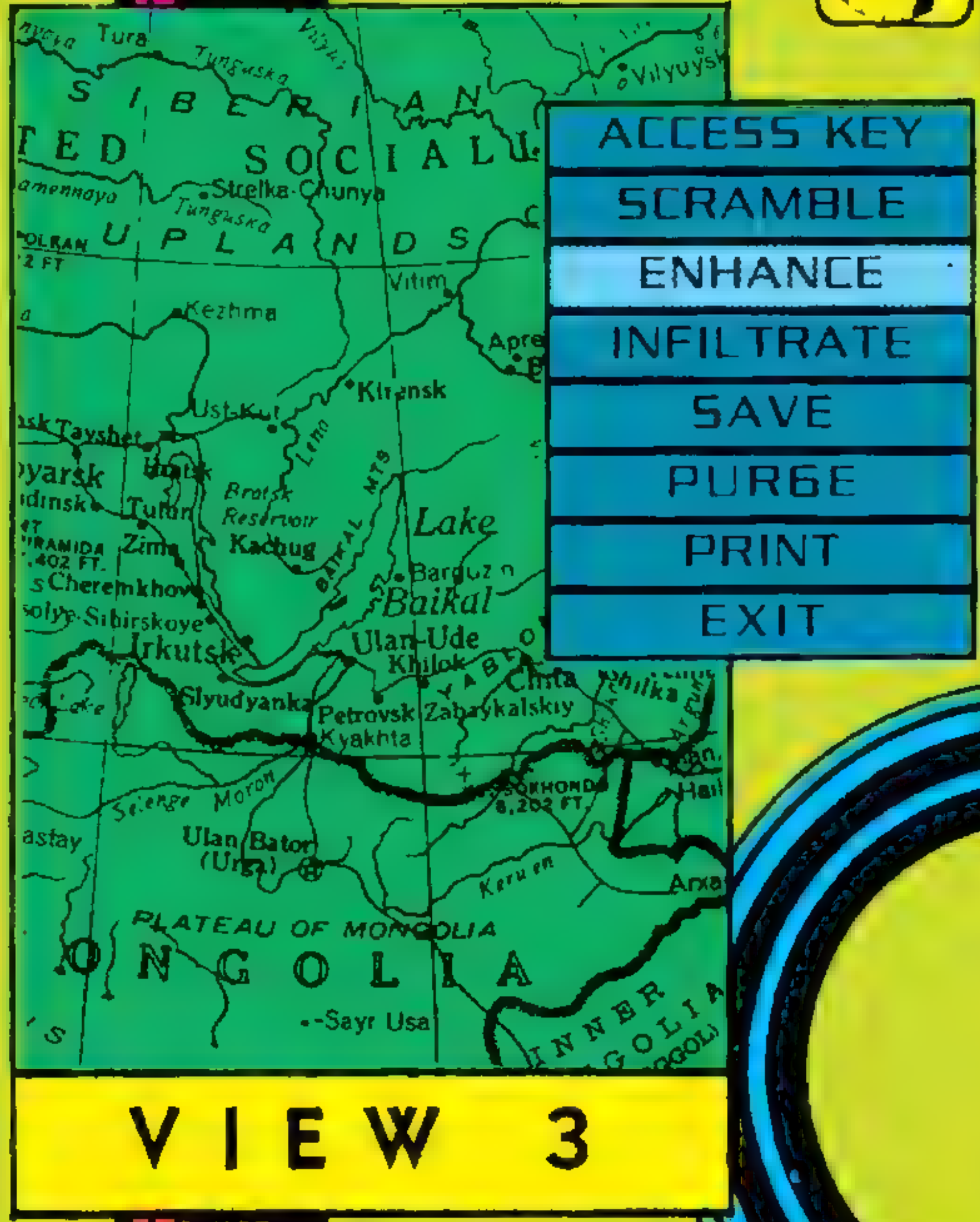
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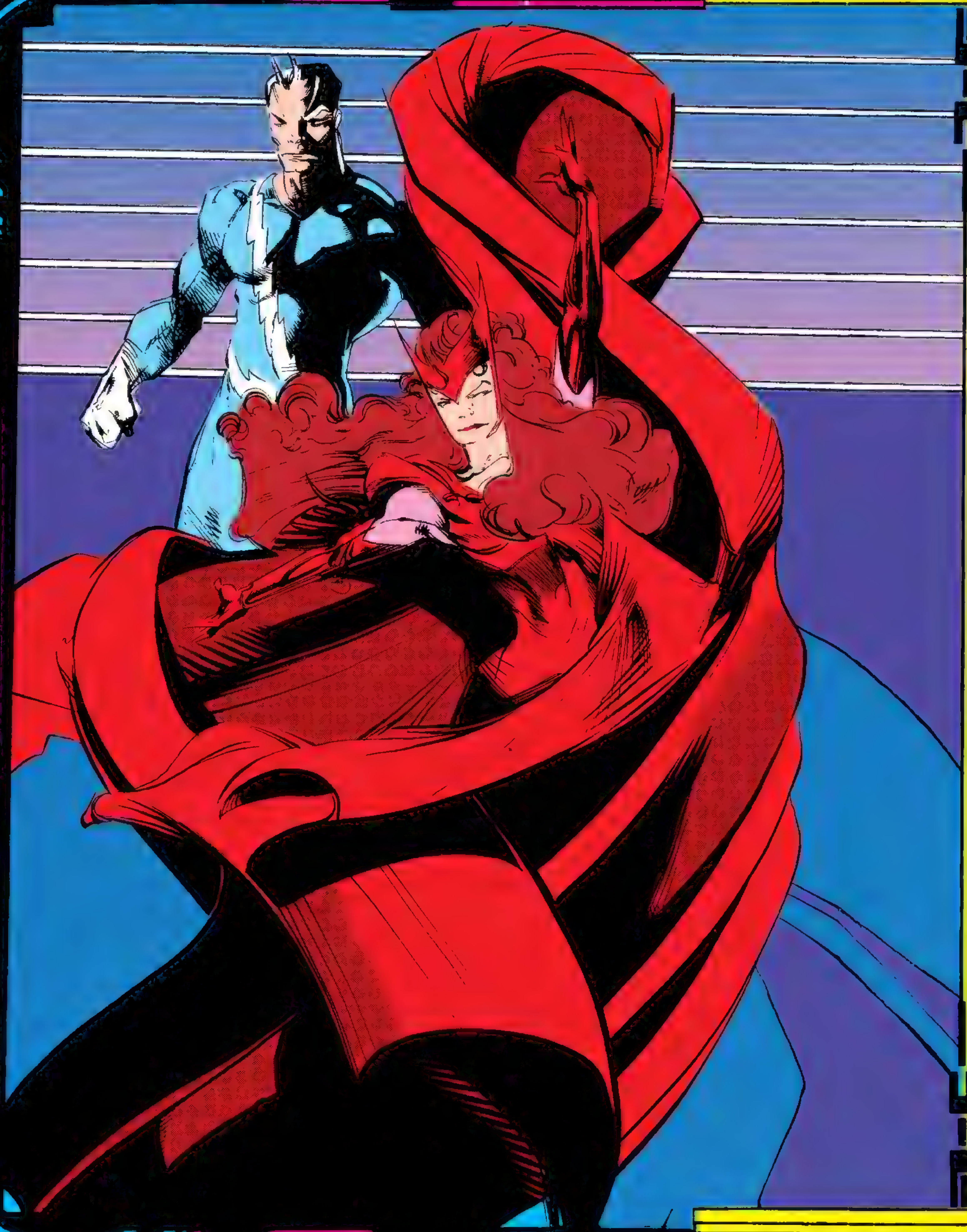

SCARLET WITCH/QUICKSILVER

The children of the failed King, they are so like their father. Having failed far more often than having succeeded, Wanda and Pietro Maximoff Magnus have seemingly resigned themselves to a life of painful mediocrity.

Pietro hides behind a rapier wit and the ability to actually be able to *run away* from his problems like no one else on the planet.

Wanda shields herself behind a veneer of self-control, in defiance of the laws of probability regarding human psychology, if not human physiology.

So where go this brother and sister? What legacy has their father left them? Will they ever be able to assume the mantle of power Magneto would most surely have wanted for them, or will they continue to play the part of the scorned children?

One thing is quite certain, between the two of them, the brother and sister hold within them power enough to rule the world, though they continually refuse to accept this fact.

They individually manipulate chance and motion — what more could they possibly need to ensure that *all* events around them proceed in a fashion suitable to their desires?

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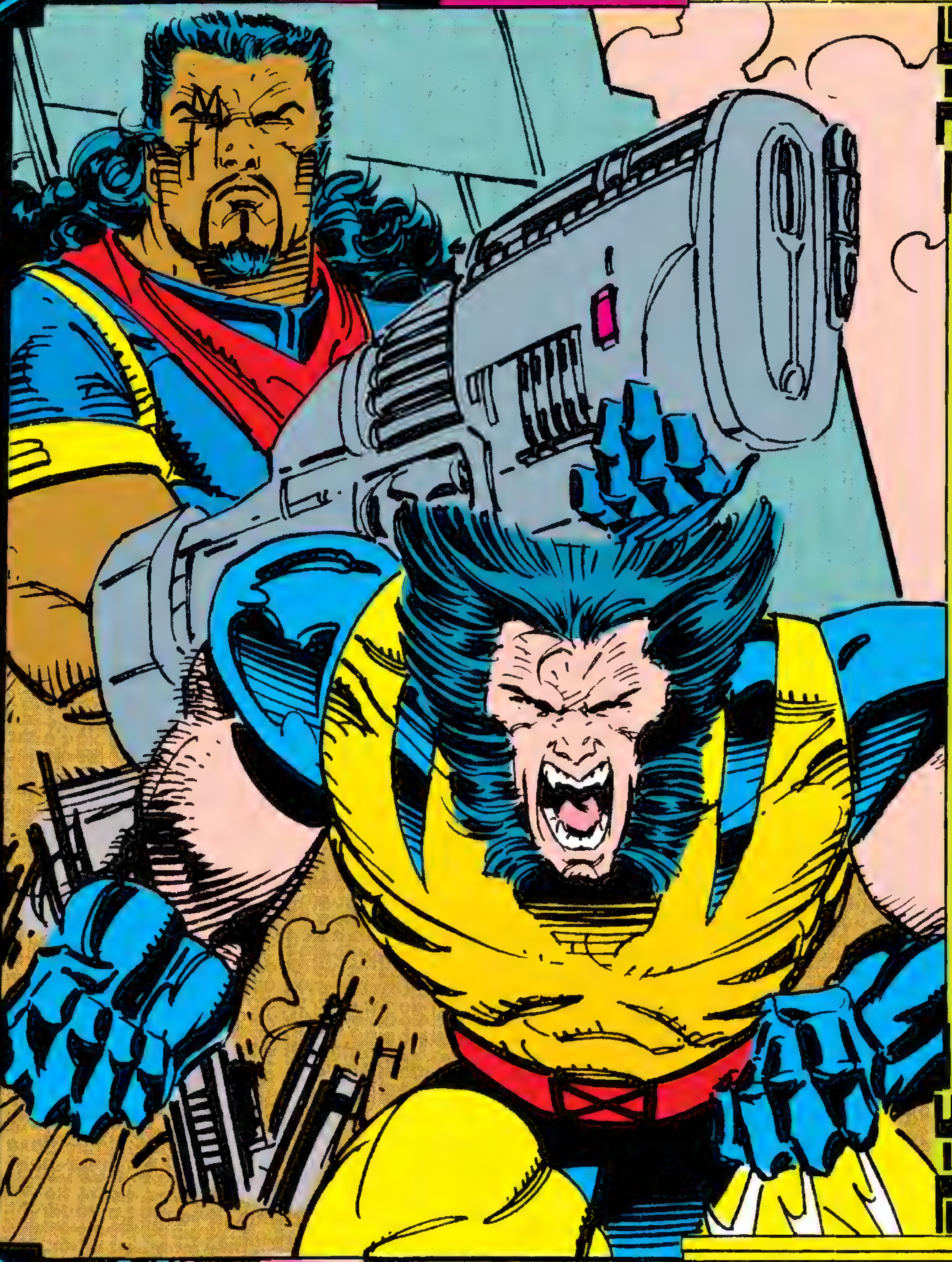
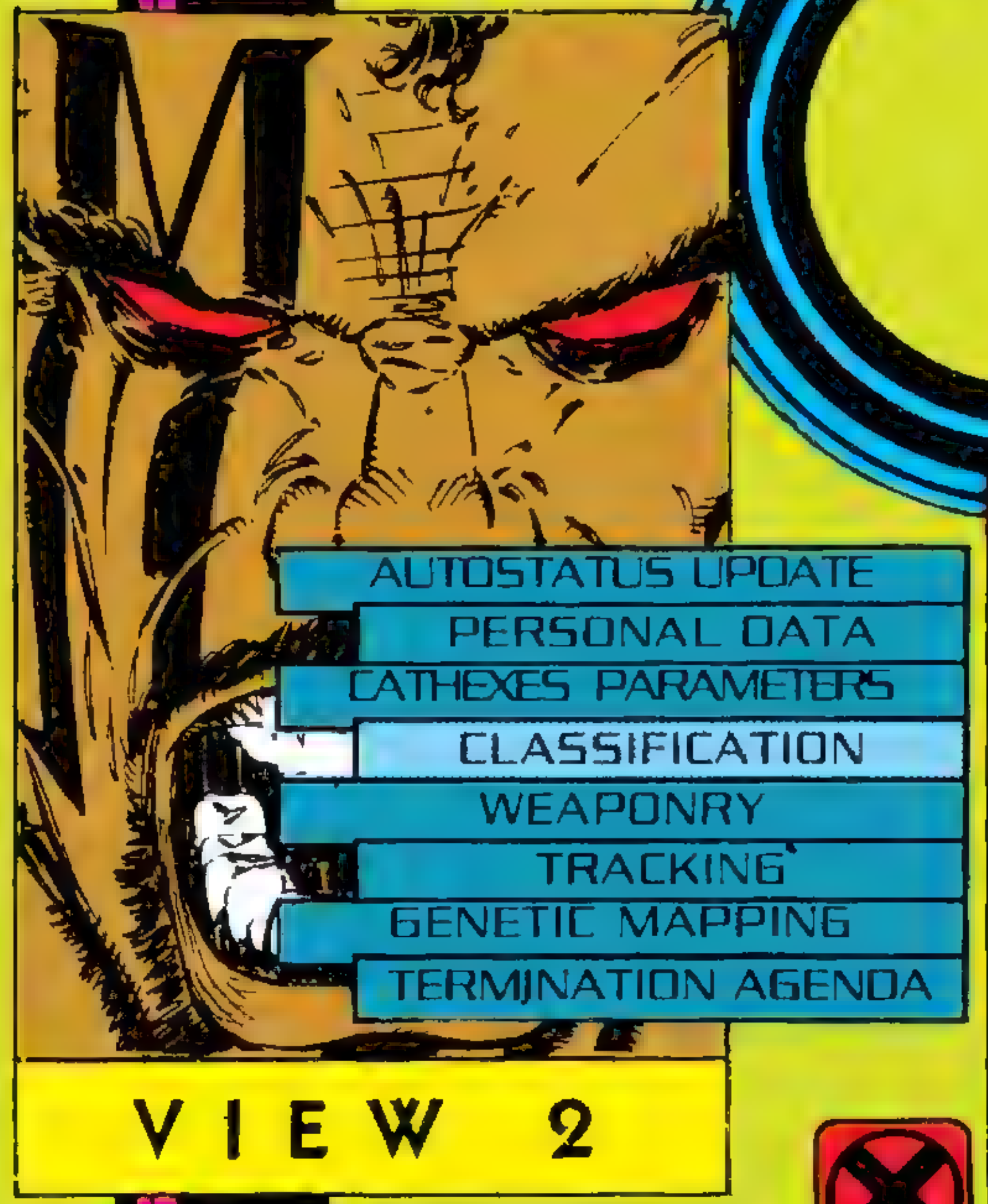


BISHOP & WOLVERINE Hunters, born and bred, in a world too weak for them. They catch the scent of trouble and think they know the intent of the prey.

One born to the pains of the past, the other to those of the future. Two men, as out of time and touch with themselves as am I.

As it stands, they are just minor players in a much larger game, no matter the importance they impart on themselves as pieces in the arena of time.

Let the pawns sniff the rotted wood for maggots. Let them catch the scent. Then they will know the scent they have captured on icy winds is that of their own fear. The smell of their own failures. The smell of their own deaths.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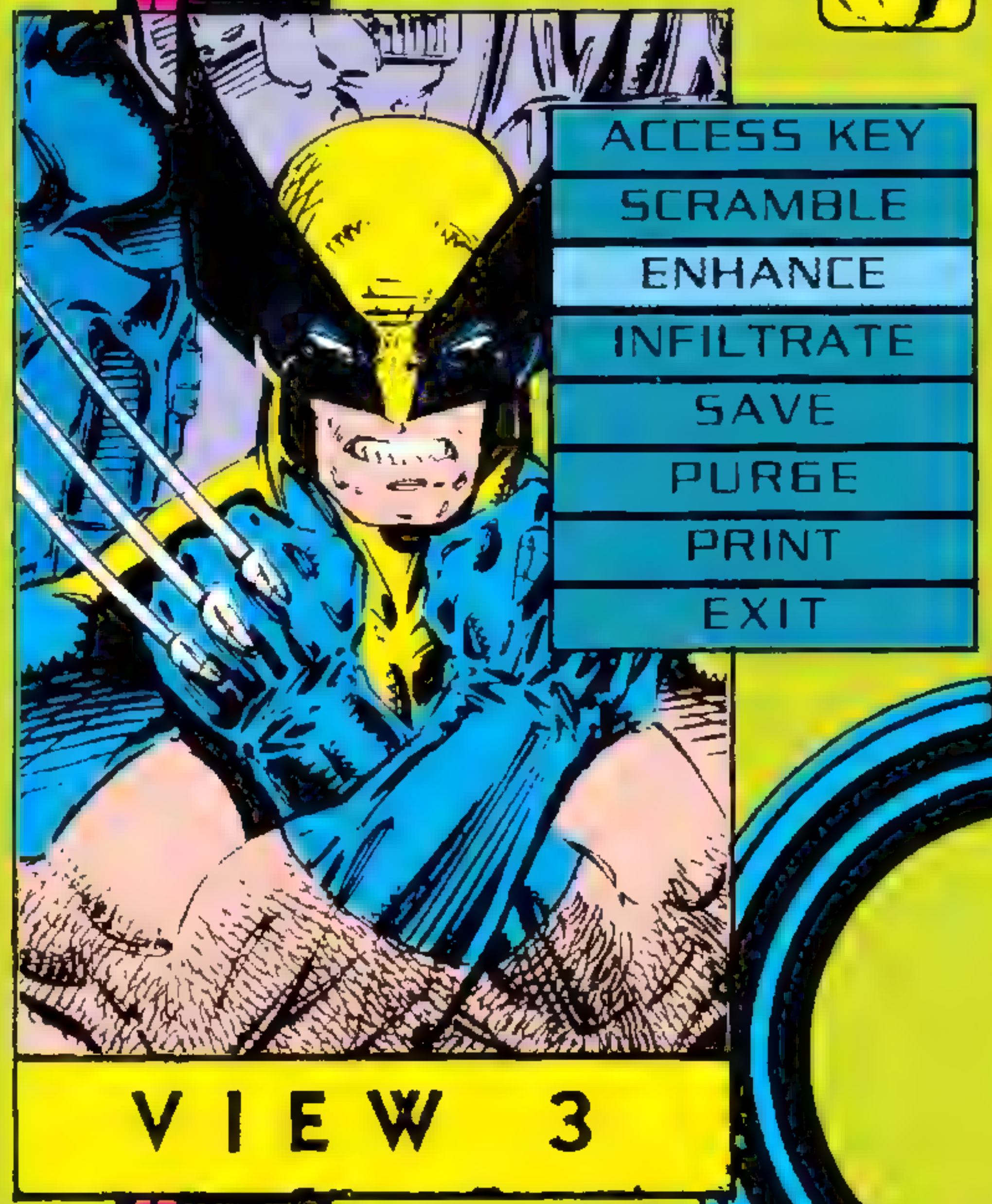
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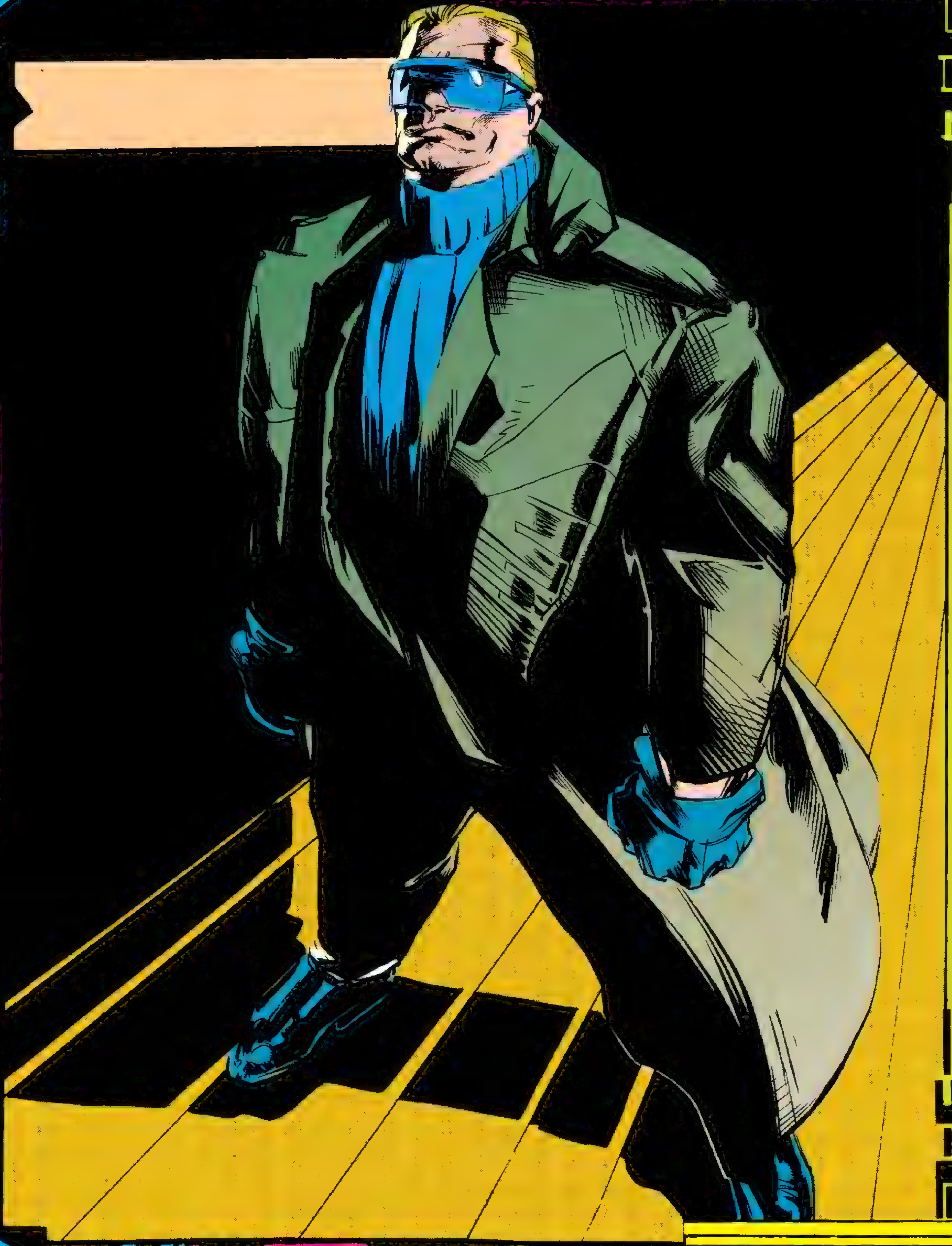


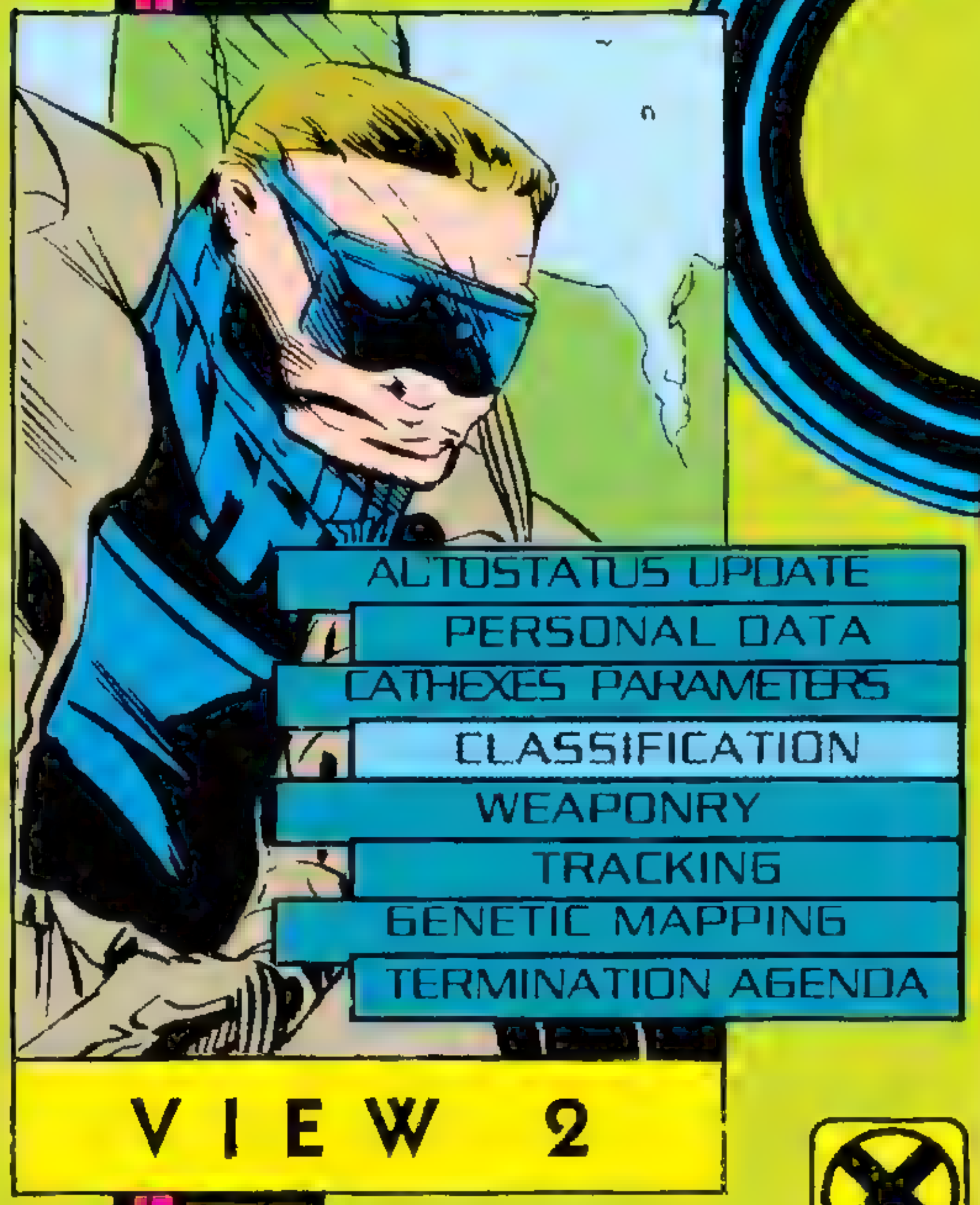
GRAYDON CREED Of the quartet of Upstarts bidding for genetic supremacy, I find this man fascinating, for unbeknownst to his competitors . . .Graydon Creed is not a mutant.

True, there is nothing unique about a human harboring a healthy fear and hatred of homosuperior. Bolivar Trask, Stephen Lang, Peter Gyrich, and to a certain extent Senator Robert Kelly . . .there is a history of would-be oppressors of mutantkind. Creed should be forever observed, and never underestimated, based on his heritage alone.

He is the only living child of the most savage, vicious mutant in all recorded history.

Born into poverty on the streets of a Mississippi river city, young Creed was abandoned and left for dead at an early age. Ironically, the same tooth and claw tactics he despises in his father have served him well in his quest for wealth and power.

While the rest of the Upstarts concentrate on "quality" kills, Creed is content with "quantity" — interested in destroying as many low grade mutants as he can. His greatest ambition is to hold his father's heart in his hand as it beats its last.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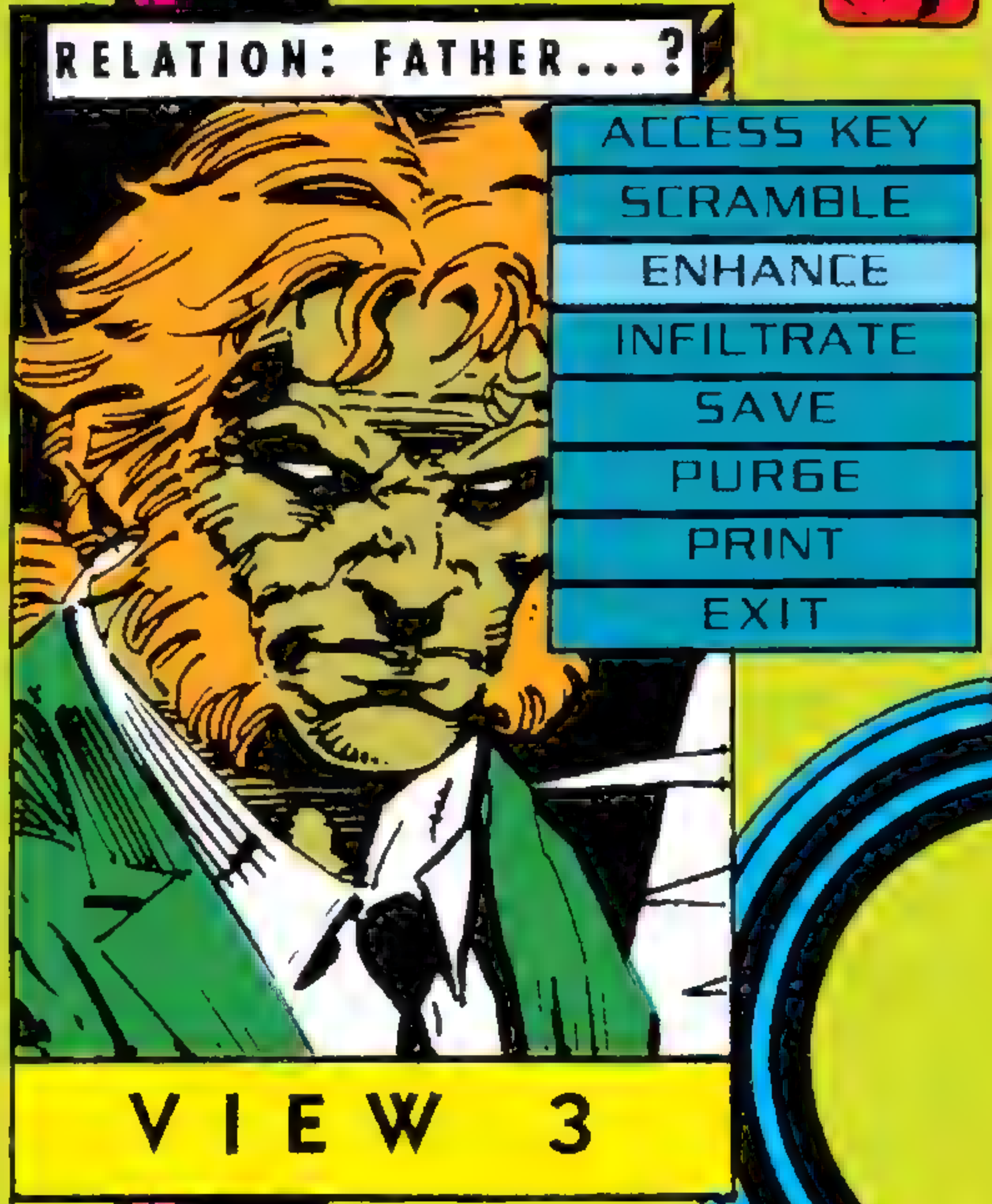
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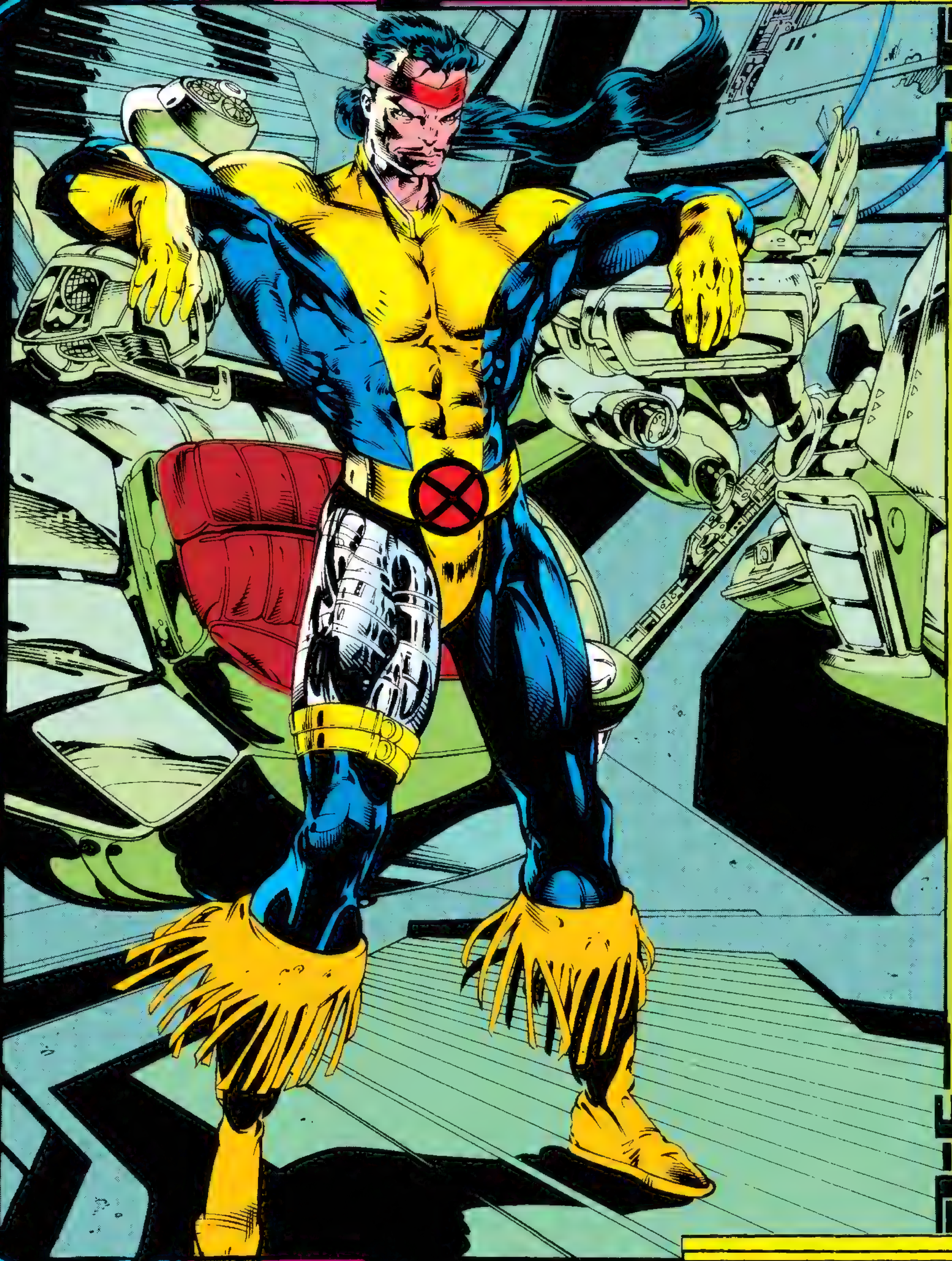

FORGE Forge is a creator of living organisms without breath, without blood, without bone, but with a miraculous spark of life nonetheless. Forge is an inventor, whose mutant ability to understand and implement mechanical functions to an almost microscopic degree, makes him an ironic candidate for Xavier's dream — which has always been one of heart and soul.

Indeed, the mechanical God-player has always flirted on the fringes of Xavier's playground, never comfortable running with the other children, but always curious enough to watch their every move.

In such consistently contradictory fashion for these children of the atom, Forge's greatest abilities lie in the polar extreme to his physical gifts: the master machinist is best at playing games of wounded emotional turmoil.

What will he do next? What will he do when my legacy consumes them all? When flesh crumbles, when hope fades, what will the mechanical mastermind be able to do with his circuits, steel rods, gears and clockworks? What will machines do when man fails? And what will Forge, who has always been as much machine as man, as conflicted and torn between the two as he is between the dream and the reality — do?

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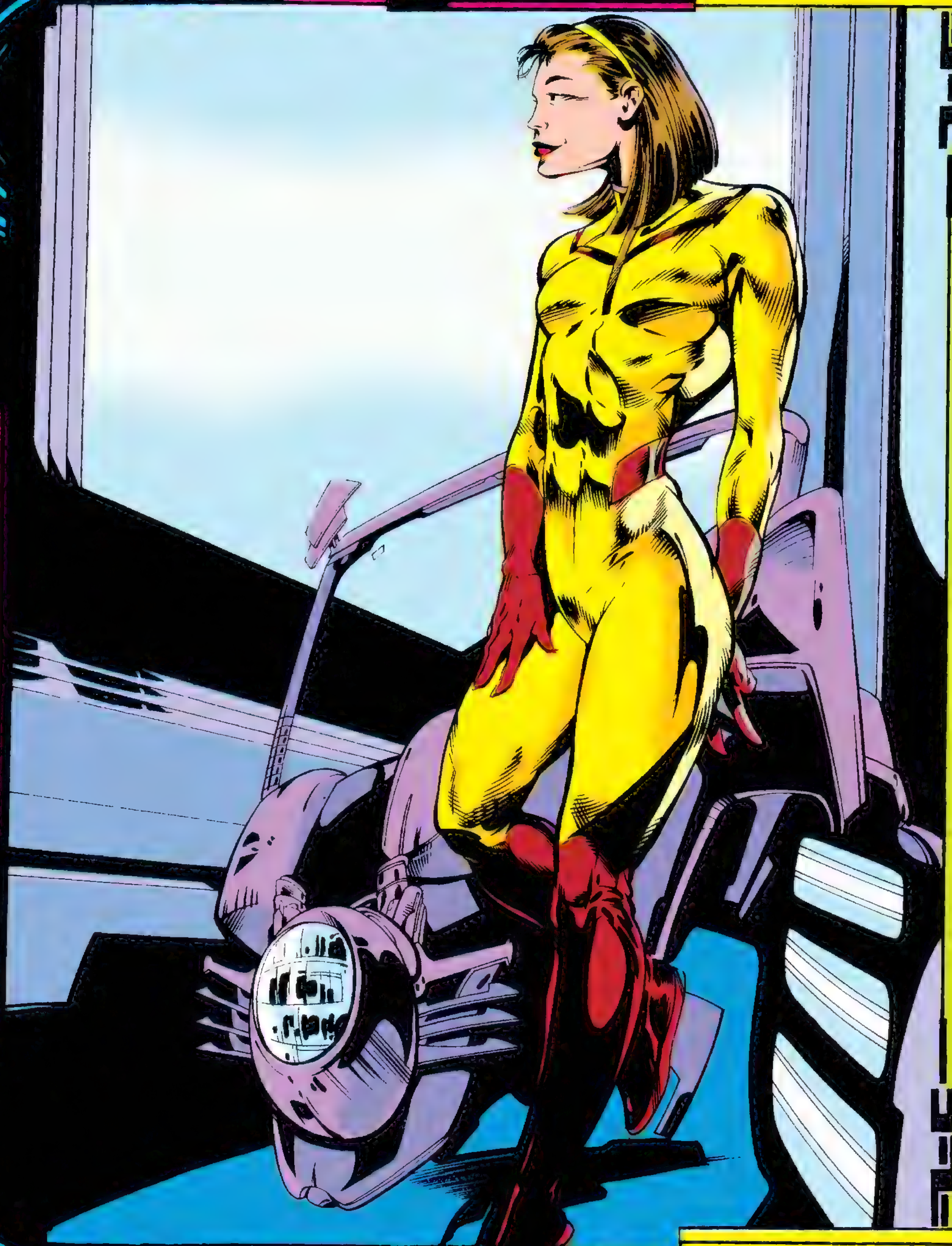
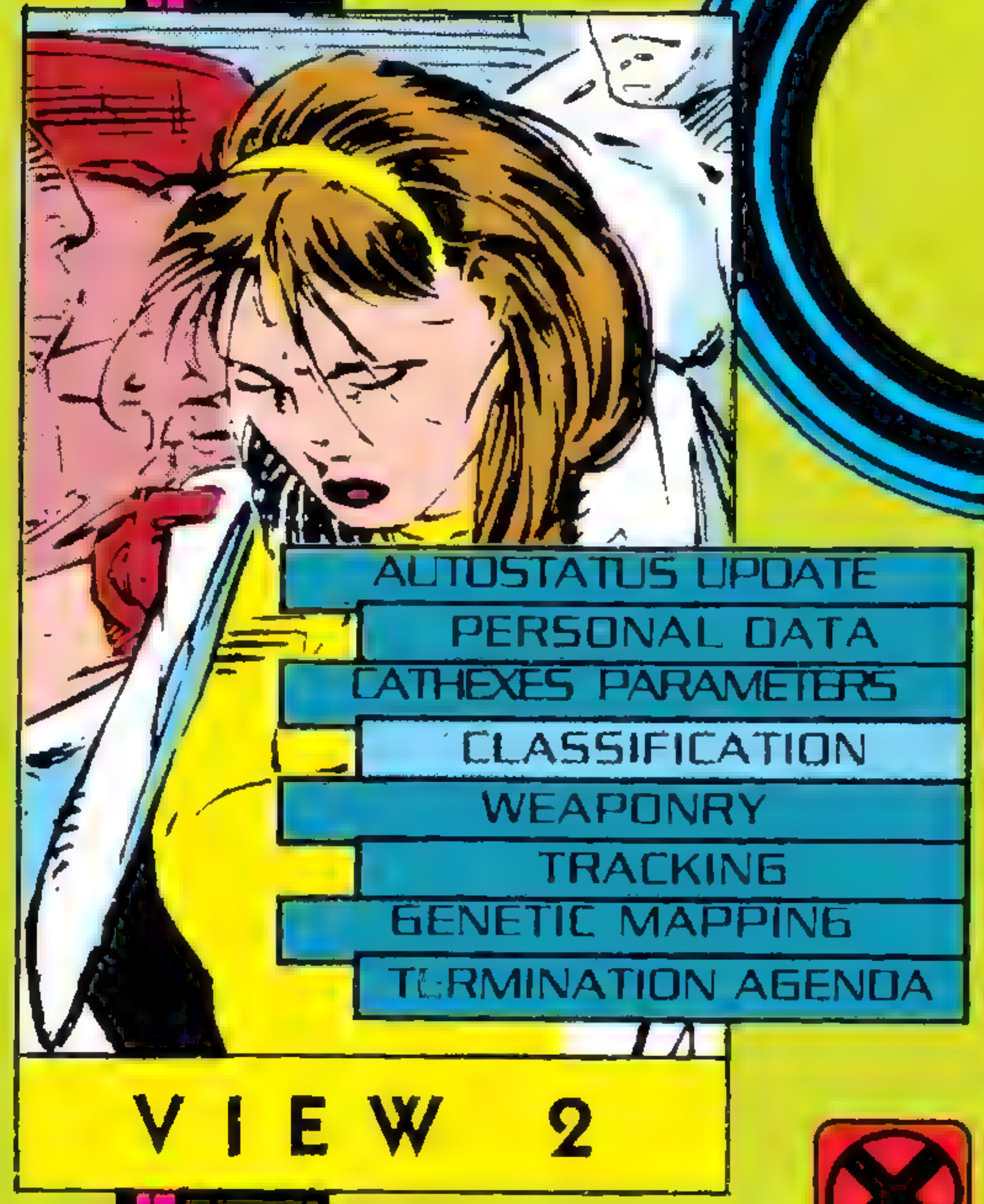


MOIRA MACTAGGERT She plays with the fates of genetics the way a child plays with building blocks. Putting them together, creating something new, piece by piece, with wondrous curiosity and petulance. The geneticist plays the game with all the callousness and indifference of a child. How else to reconcile the deeds she has performed in the name of man and mutantkind?

A poke here and her son Kevin is lost to her forever, a probe there and an infant Magneto is forever scarred.

My legacy is so perfectly fitting for her, of all people, for she will have to come to terms with the storm on the horizon. And as the winds of hatred whip up, as a torrent of misery gushes down, as the skies break open and release my agony on this pathetic planet, Moira MacTaggert will be standing atop a hill, buffeted by the storm, revelling in its primal force.

The irony being, that when mutants will be at their worst — dying from the inside out, Moira MacTaggert will be at her best — poking and prodding, playing with the building blocks of life. . .all in the name of science and saving lives. Will she succeed — or even more appetizing — will she even want to?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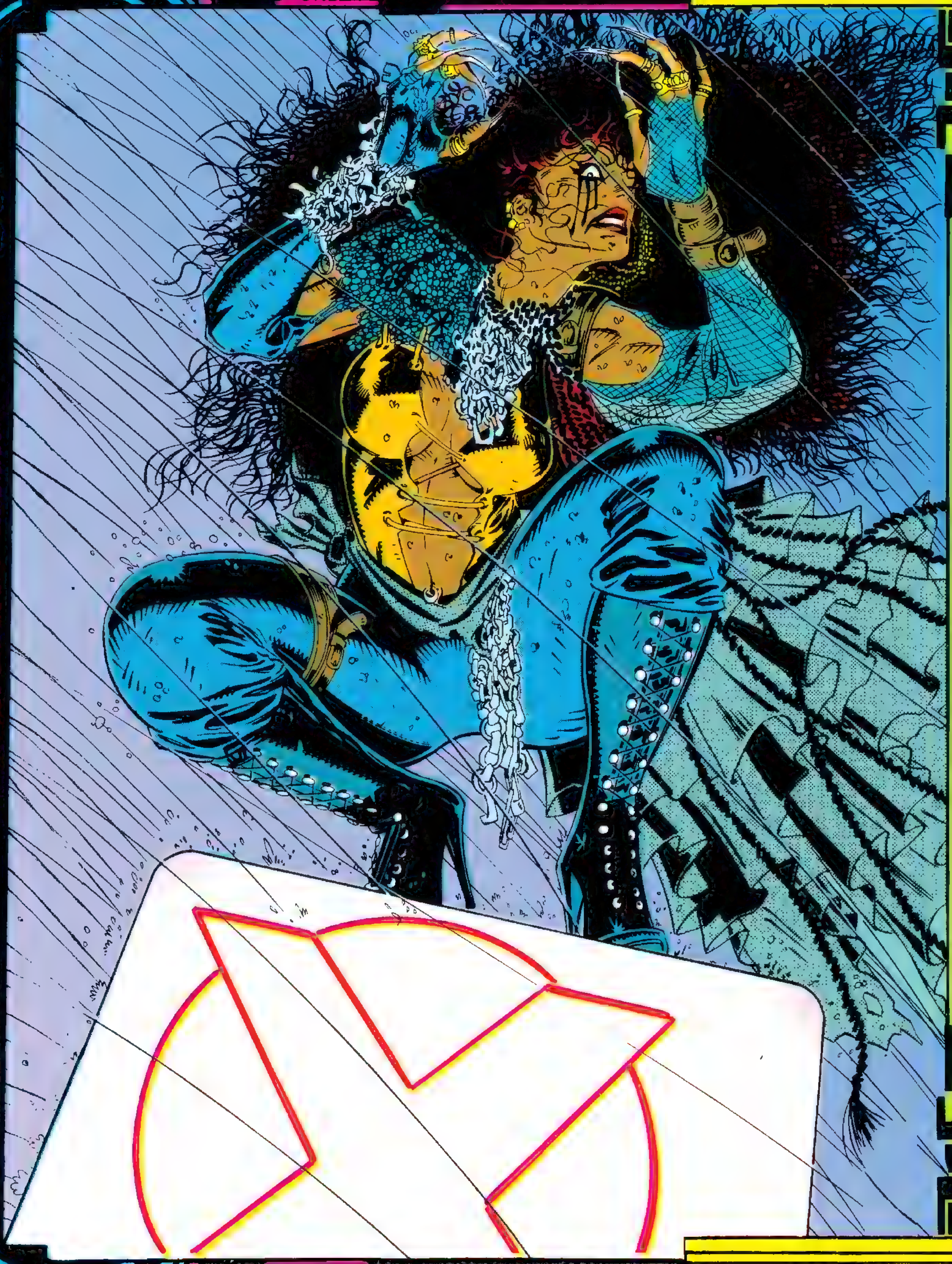
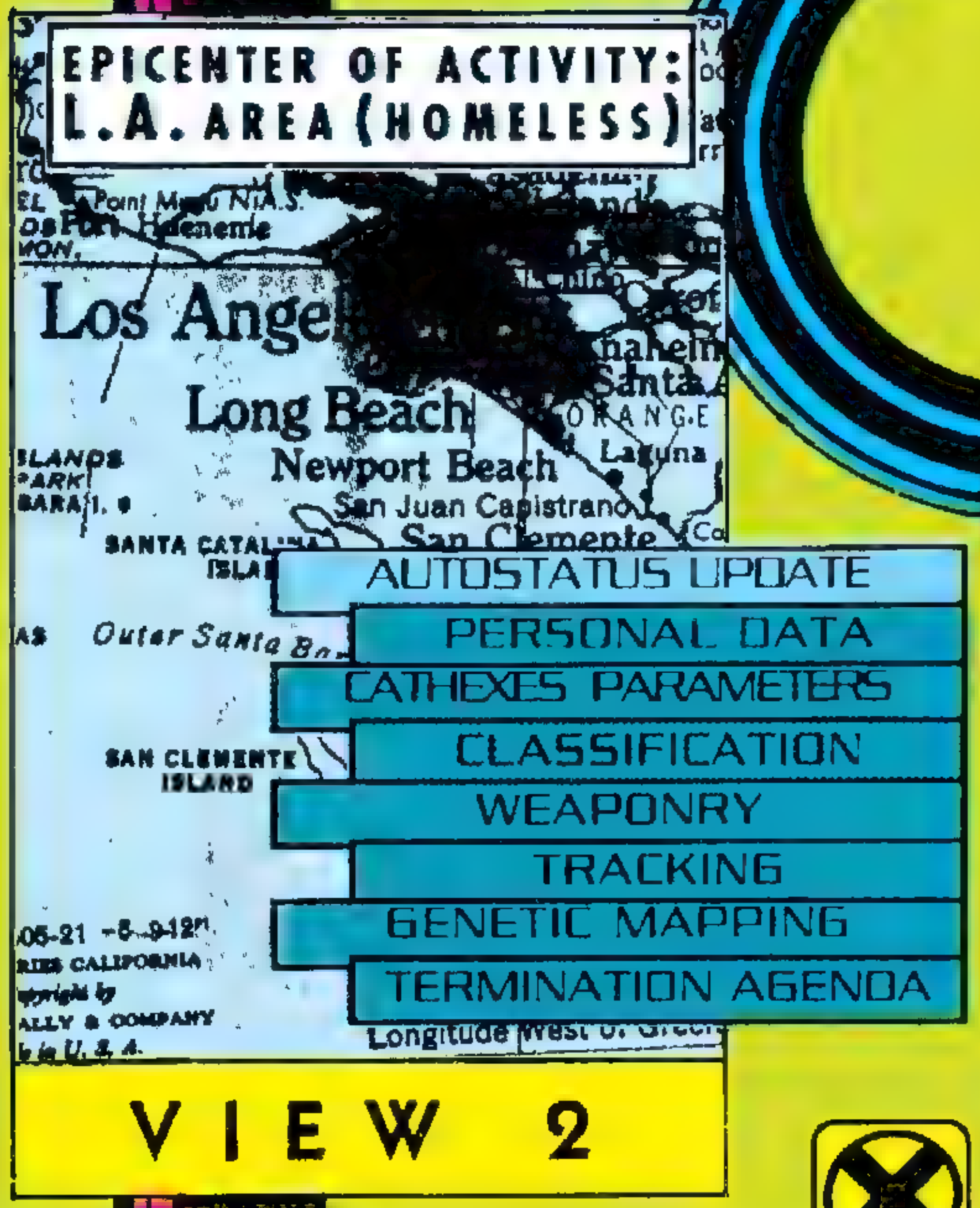


THRENODY She wakes up to the chirping of the birds and hears only a song of mourning. She strides into the daylight sun and sees only the dark cloud before every silver lining. She smells the sizzle of bacon, the aroma of coffee and thinks only of the decay of dead animals and vegetation.

Threnody has sung her song of misery in minor refrains since her childhood was young, but now that she is an adult, her Wagnerian opus — her glorious song of despair — has yet to rock the world.

She begins to sense it, little by little, the coming of the plague — the bell chimes of the dead ringing in her ears. Every day, she draws her knees a little closer to her chest, a soft hot breath of fear whistles through her lips.

And when Threnody is given the chance to sing, the world will hear her shriek—and the world will know my legacy lives on—as mutantkind dies about them...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Port Hueneme
Los Angel
Long Beach
Newport Beach
ORANGE
Laguna
San Juan Capistrano
San Clemente
SANTA CATALINA ISLAND
Outer Santa Ba
SAN CLEMENTE ISLAND
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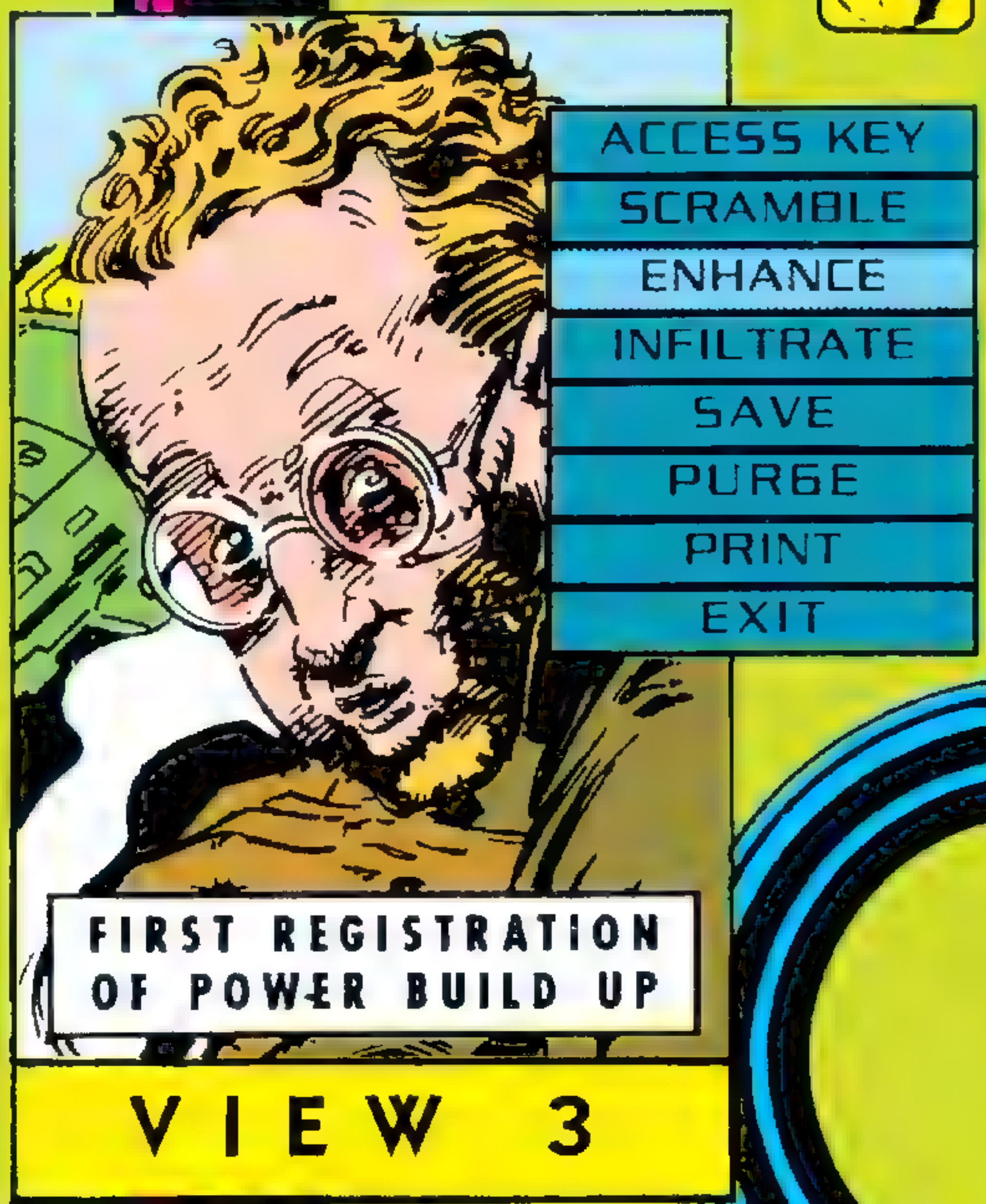
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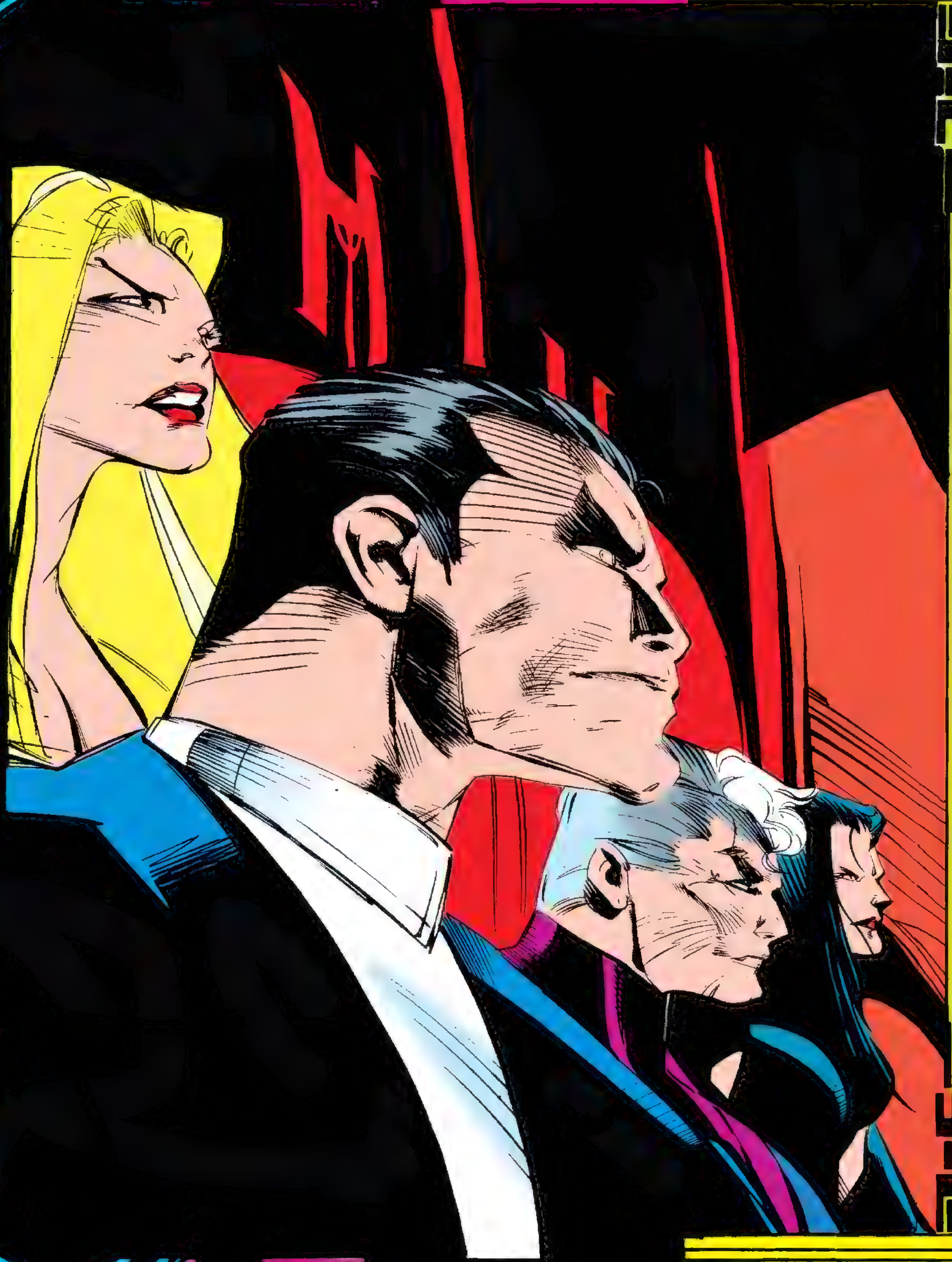

SEBASTIAN SHAW /HELLFIRE CLUB Dead is dead, as well we all know, in flesh and blood. But dead is a meaningless word in spirit and deed. Sebastian Shaw knew that well. What he inherited, he also left behind — a legacy of power, deceit, manipulation and greed. And the child he bore so recklessly and indifferently, assumed the mantle quite nicely to slay the dragon which was his father and continue the game apace.

What did Sebastian Shaw accomplish then, in his long and illustrious life? He increased the viability and power of the Hellfire Club. Presided over the prospering of this filthy extrapolation of Xavier's dreams — this elite bastion to self-proclaimed superiority, where both mutants and humans intermingled — comfortable in the climate of mutually assured wealth and fame.

And now, with dear Sebastian dead, what becomes of this institution? Presidents publically lamented Shaw's passing and privately hoped the Club would continue without him, but the children of the Club seemed as passionately uninterested in its upkeep as they were vehement in its destruction.

That is what Shaw left then, the end result of swimming a lifetime in shark-infested waters — a gravestone with his name on the marker and an empty tomb inside. Empty of heart and soul, life and passion.

In all, Sebastian Shaw left nothing. . .

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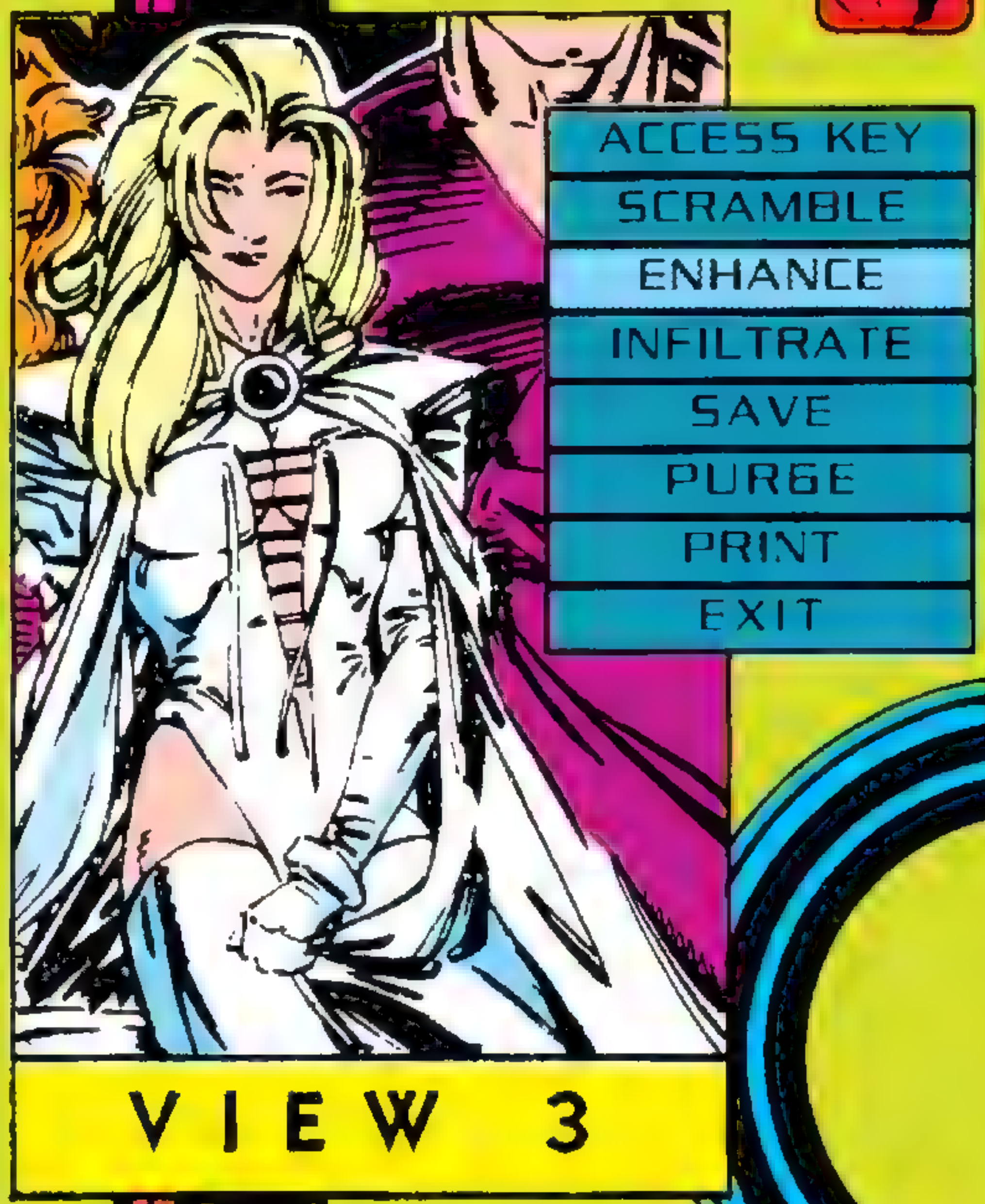
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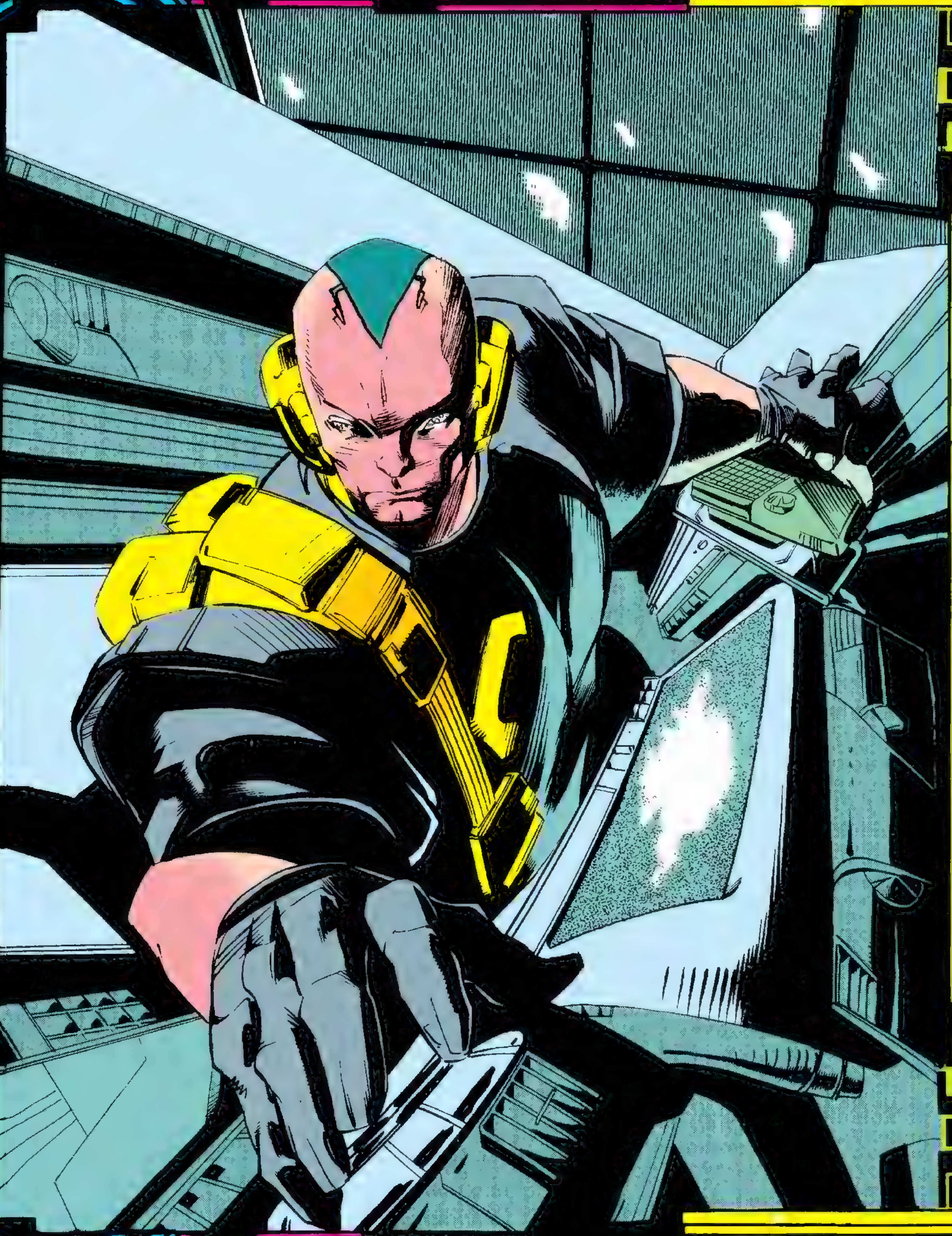


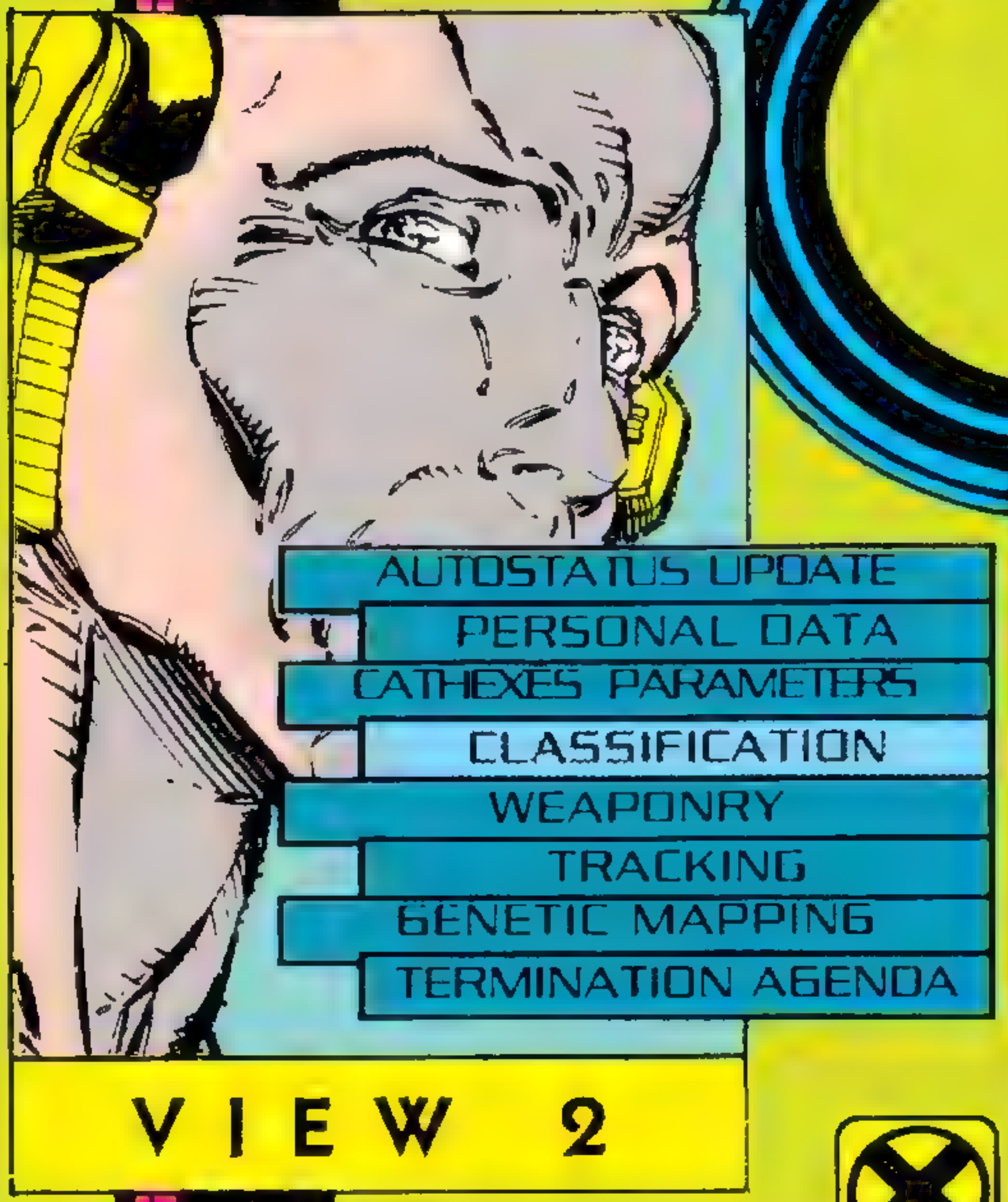
GAMESMASTER Imagine, a million thoughts rampaging through your mind all at once. The fears and hopes, the loves and hates, the agony and the ecstasy of every living being on the face of the planet. . .all competing for your full attention. Twenty-four hours a day. Every day of your life.

The young man known only as the Gamesmaster is an omnipath. For all his power, he is powerless to shut out a single thought. There is no sentient being capable of shielding his thoughts from him. He is equally unable to prevent those thoughts from intruding on his psyche.

His mutant ability is constantly "on."

His only respite comes from a most unexpected quarter. So strong are the thoughts and desires of the quartet of power mongers known as the Upstarts, the Gamesmaster has discovered their "competition" provides him with momentary distractions from the mental mosaic forever etched upon every square inch of his mind.

The Gamesmaster acts not out of any grandiose bids for world domination — he acts to preserve his ever-fragile sanity.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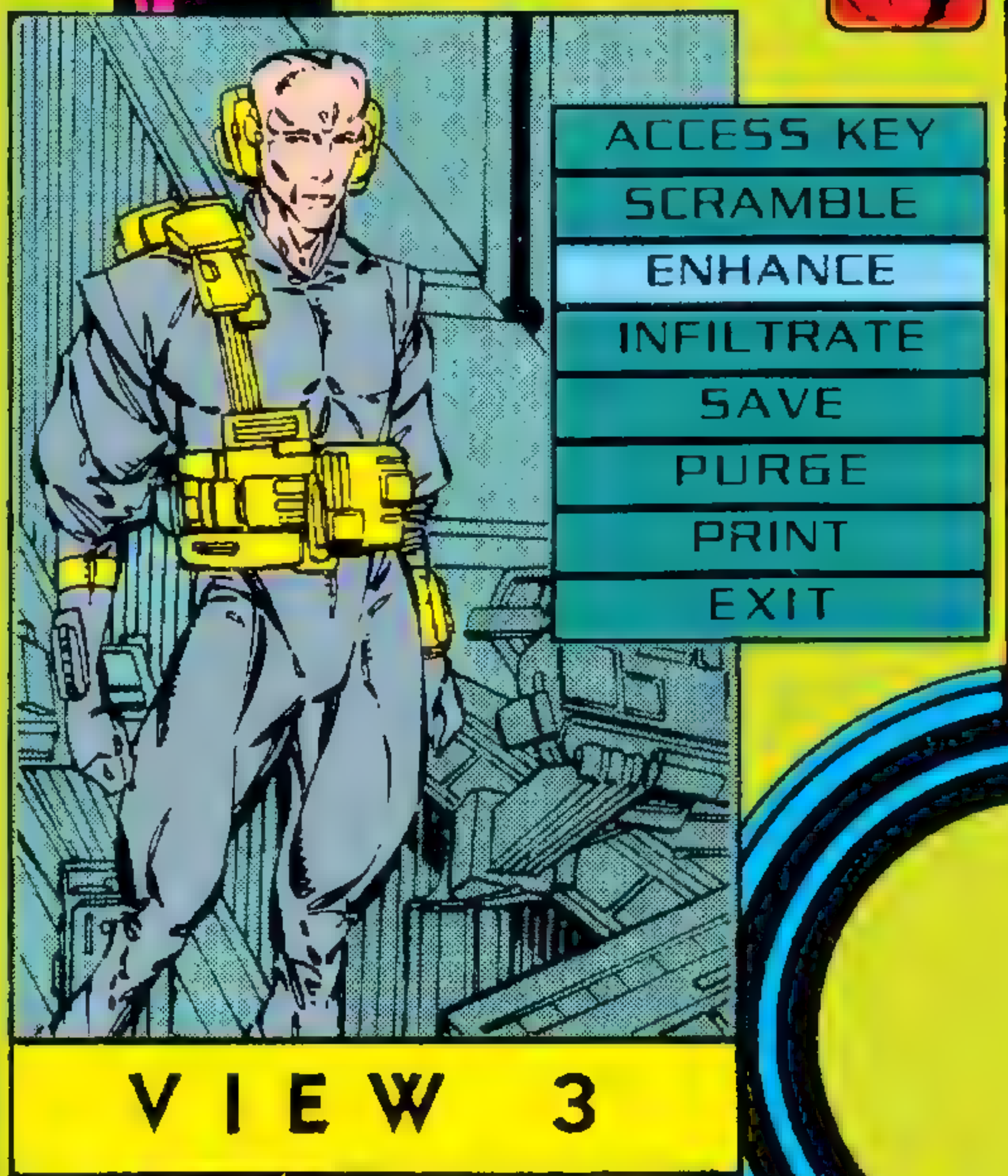
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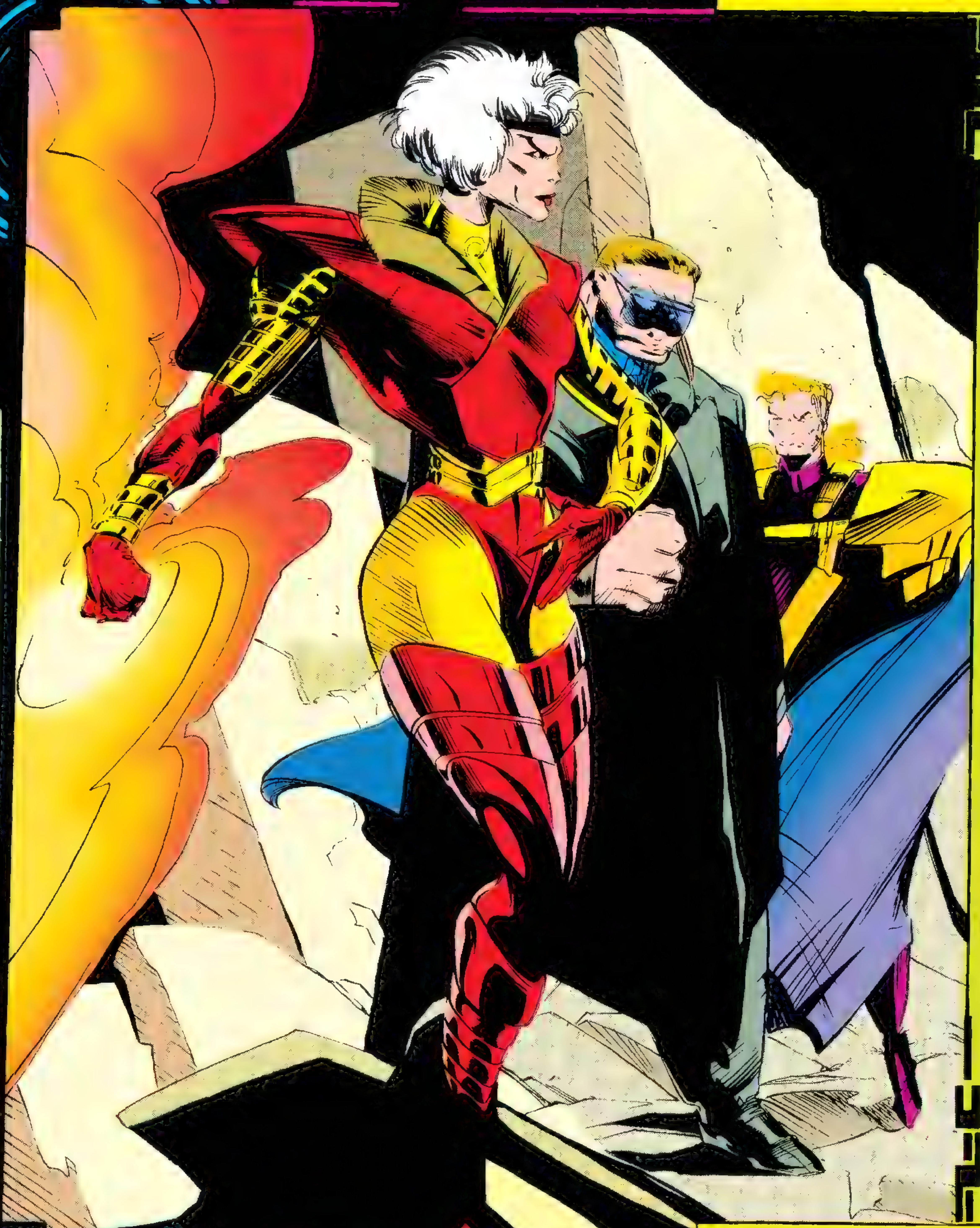


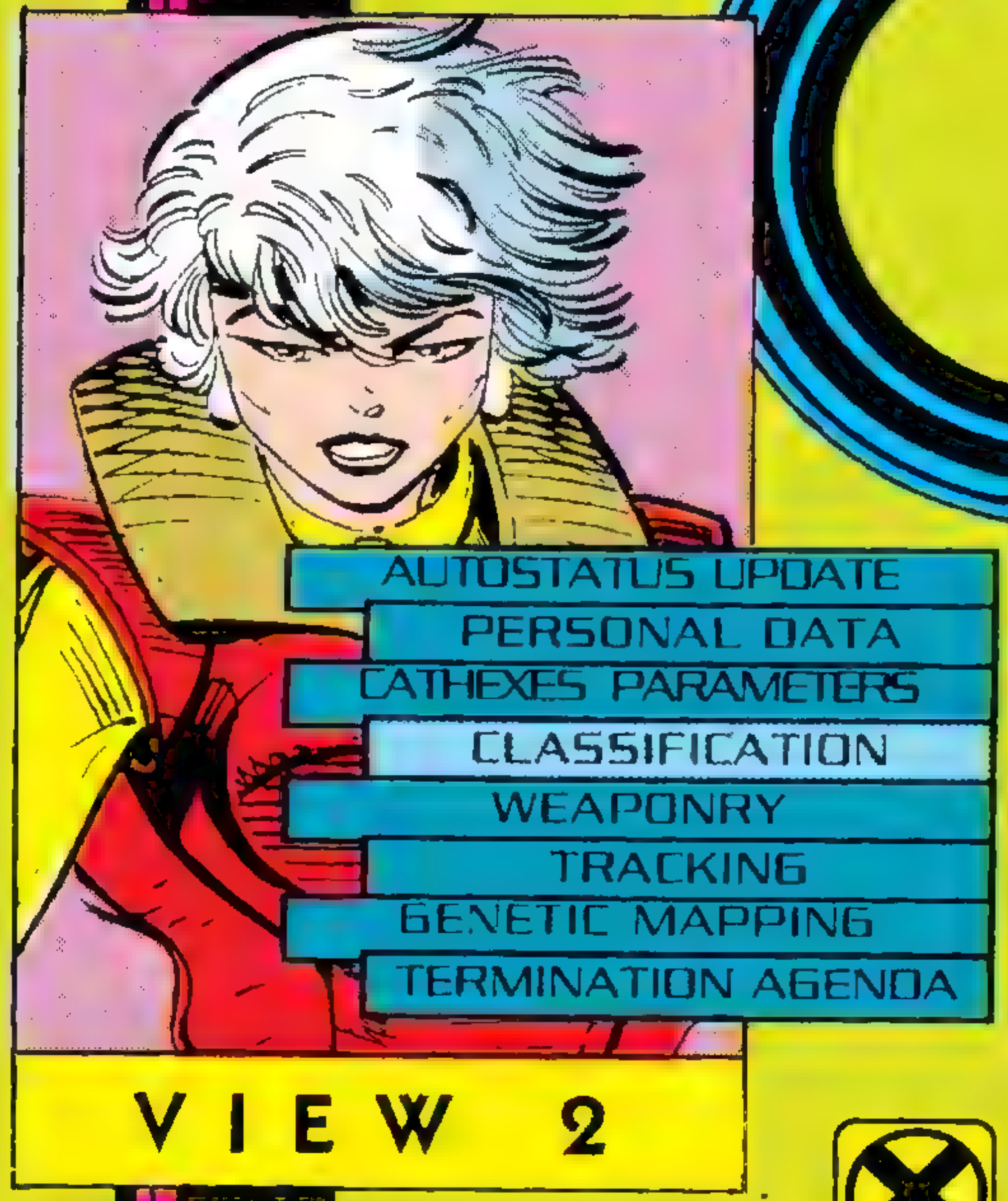
THE UPSTARTS The billionaire boys club that fancies themselves the rightful heirs of mutant leadership. How ironic then that the most deserving of my attention is not a 'boy' at all.

Siena Blaze possesses the singular ability to disrupt the electromagnetic field of the planet earth — making her a walking natural disaster. More frightening is what lies beneath her angry, volatile and self-destructive exterior.

Unlike the rest of the Upstarts, all intent on ruling Mutantkind for their own agenda, this young woman of privilege would no sooner wish to rule an ant hill — so far removed is she from the concepts of Humanity which fuel the ambitions of her competitors. She is dangerous because her self-image is based entirely on her quest for leadership of the Upstarts.

Her power is not without a cost, however, for each time she uses it — she risks not only her own life, but that of every living being on the planet. To most that would serve as an impediment — this woman views the threat of world destruction as a fringe benefit of her mutant birthright.

Too unstable to easily control — unlike, in may ways the Upstarts themselves — Siena Blaze is an unwanted variable in the fruition of my legacy.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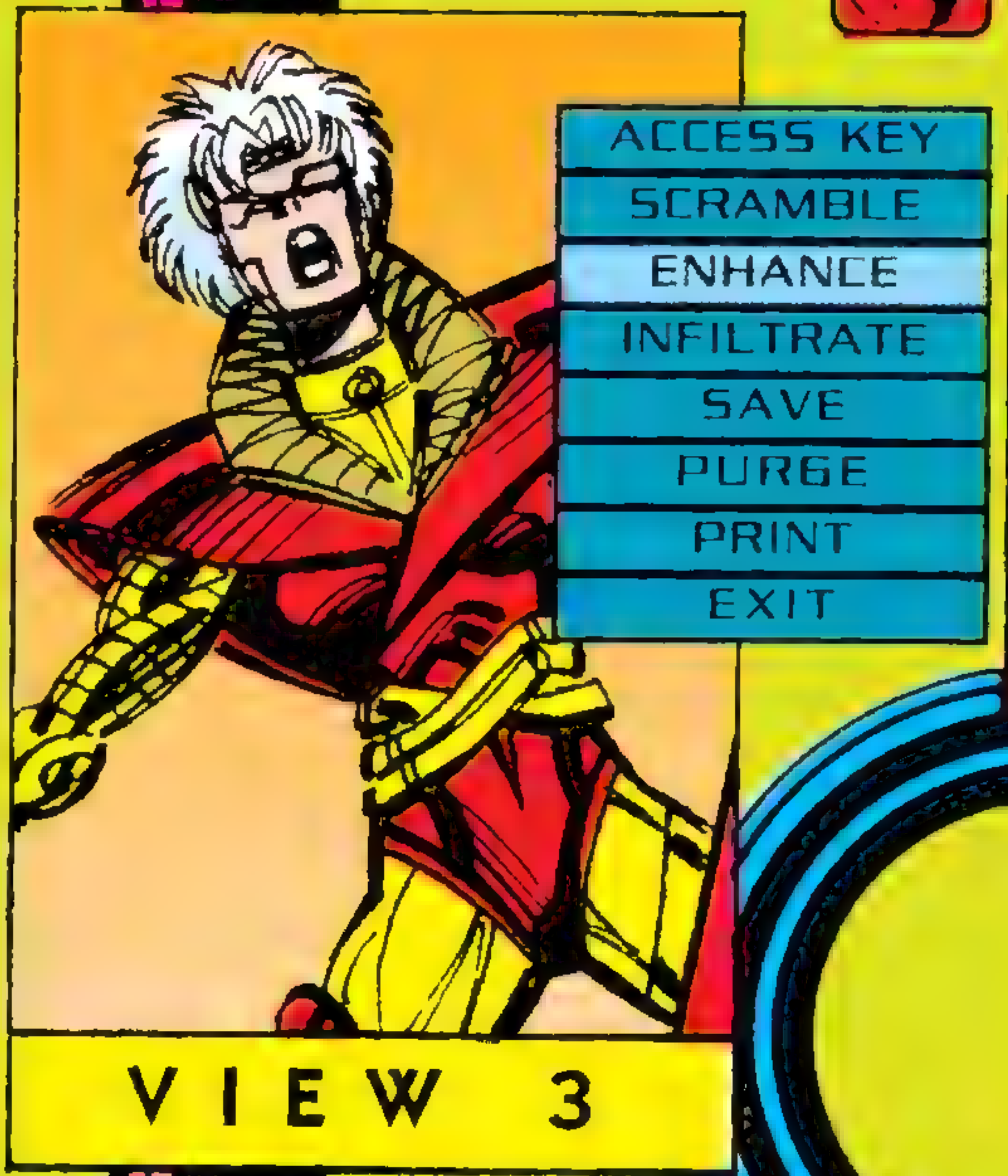
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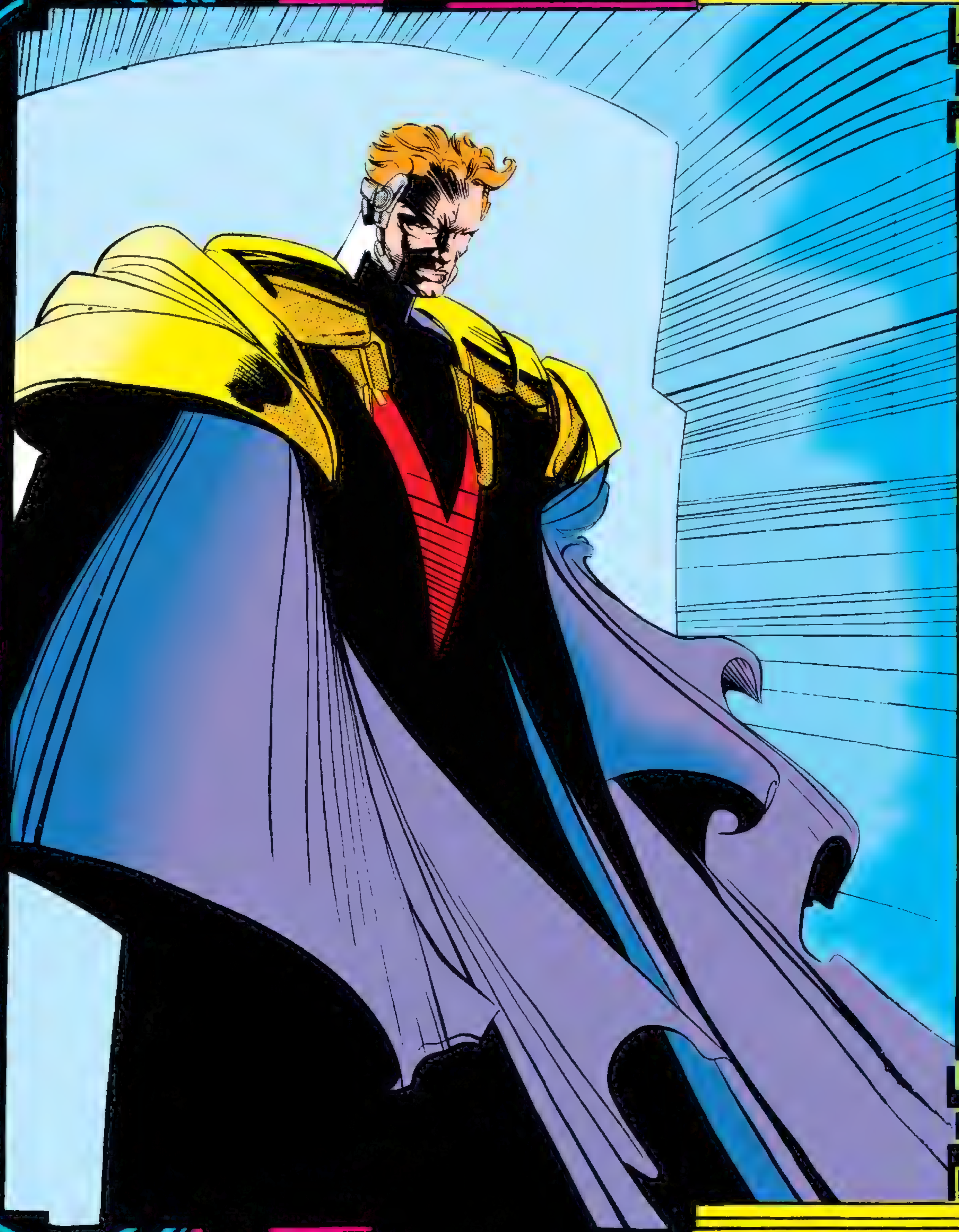
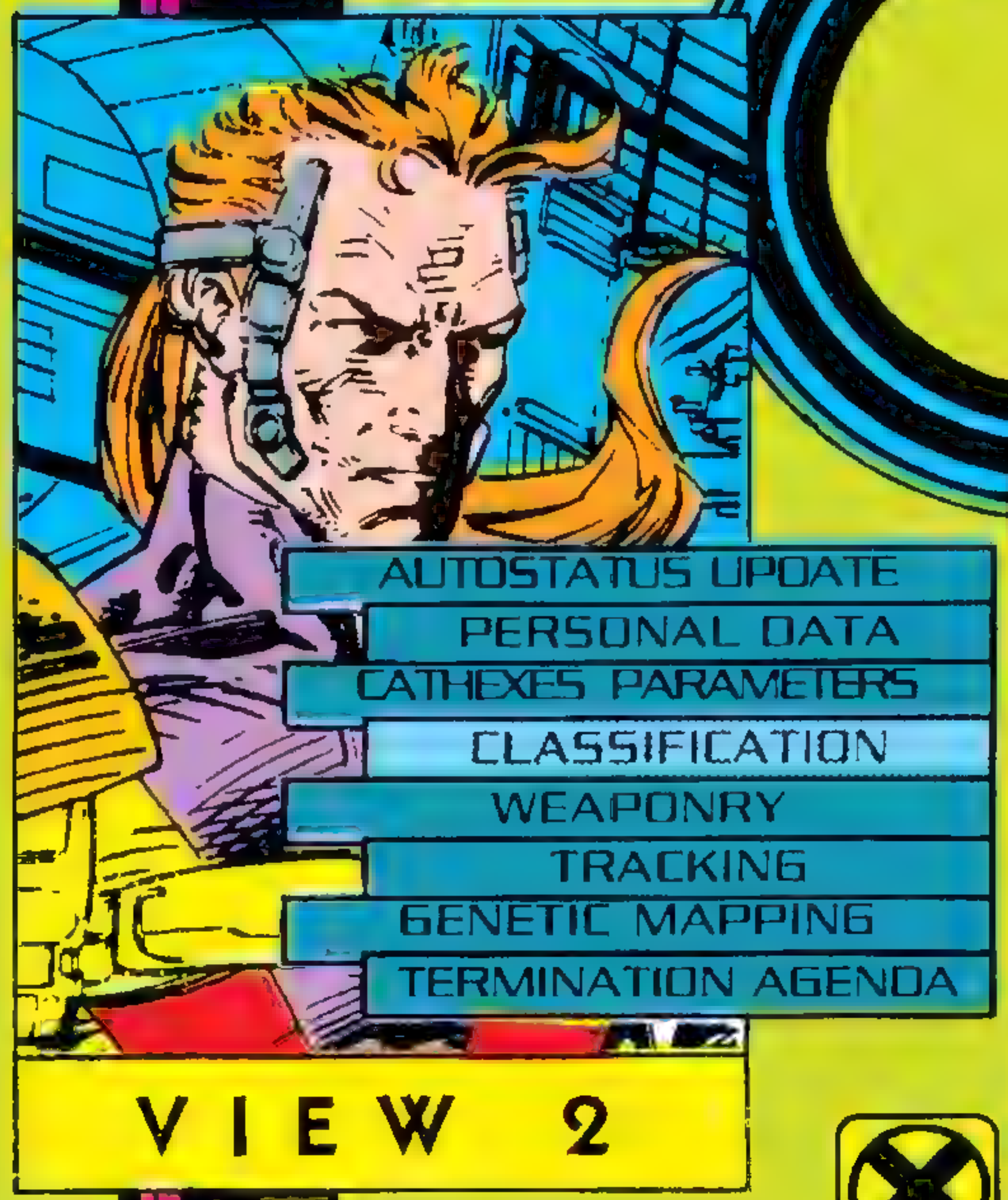


FABIAN CORTEZ has become a never-ending source of fascination, as has the frequency with which a mutant's personality is reflected by his power. Nowhere is that more clearly defined than in the persona of Fabian Cortez. The man's ability to exponentially increase the powers of other mutants is symbiotic in nature — his personality hinges on the need to manipulate those others to accomplish his goals.

Being born royalty, heir to a financial fortune beyond reckoning, was apparently not enough for this ambitious young mutant. Currently the undisputed leader of the Acolytes after the supposed death of their Messiah, Magneto (a passing he had more to do with than they suspect), this role serves solely as a means to accomplish his higher goal of ruling the Upstarts—the self-appointed class elite of Mutantkind.

Yes, Cortez knows much about ambition, greed and avarice. The time is near that he learns the lesson of humility...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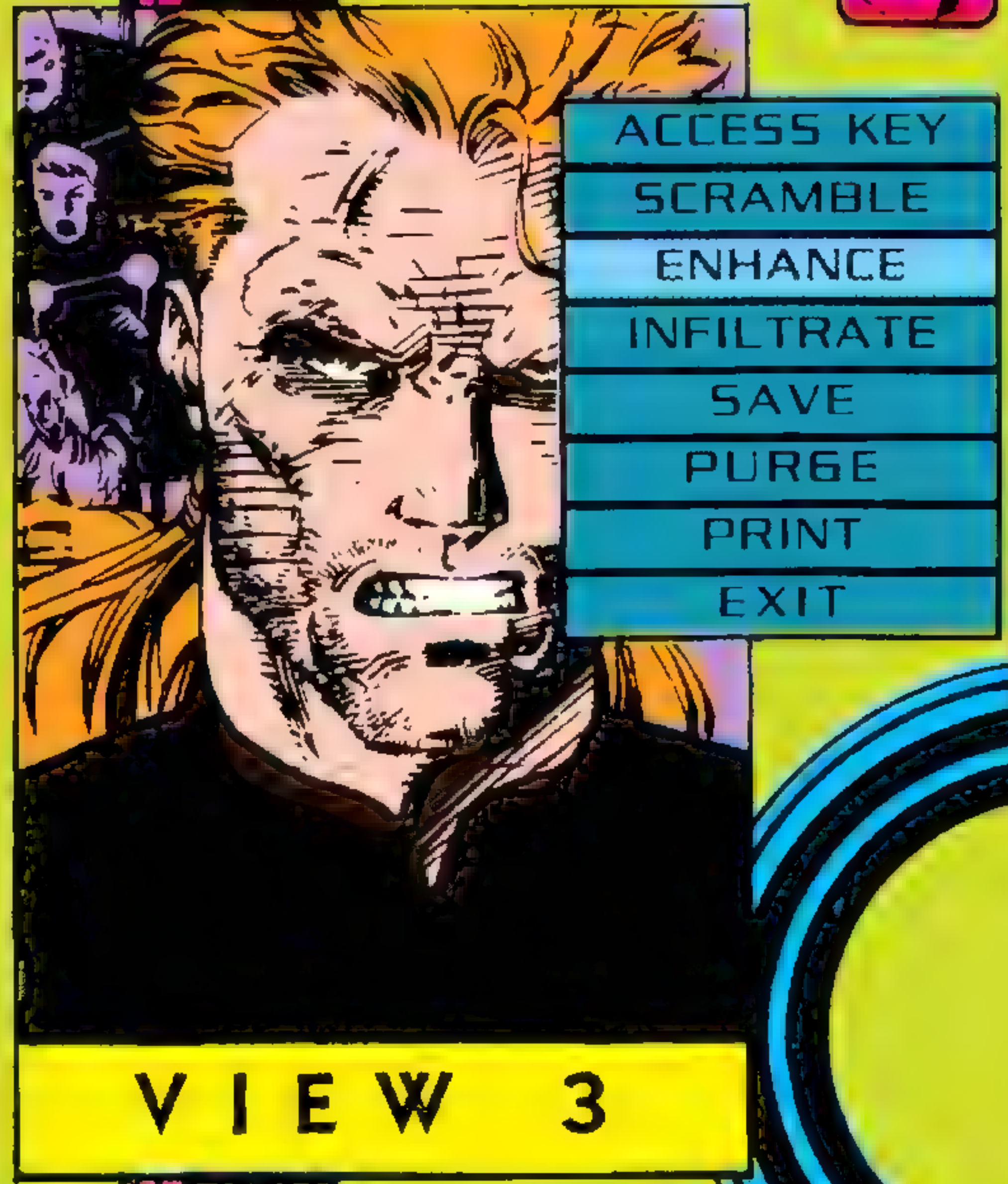
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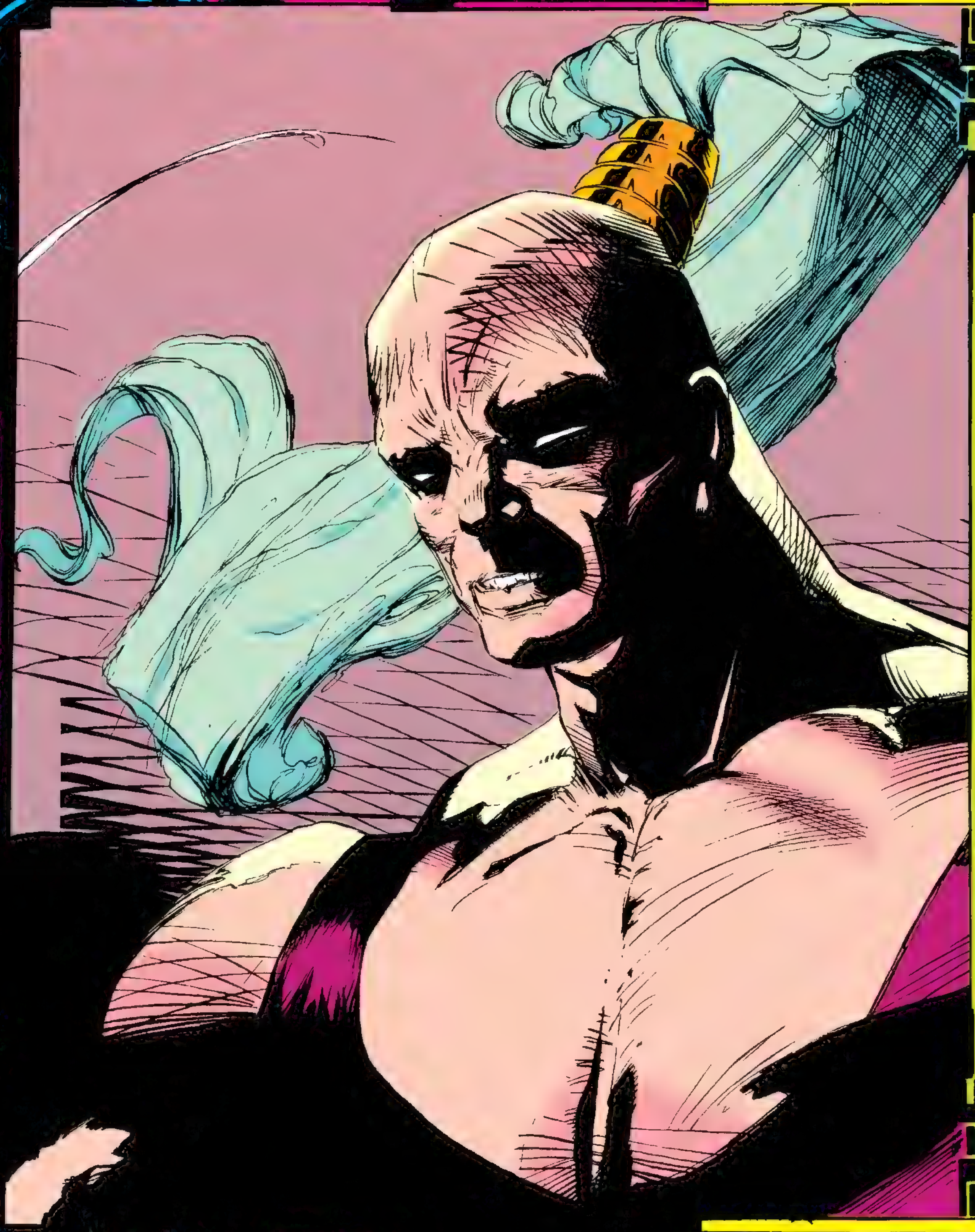
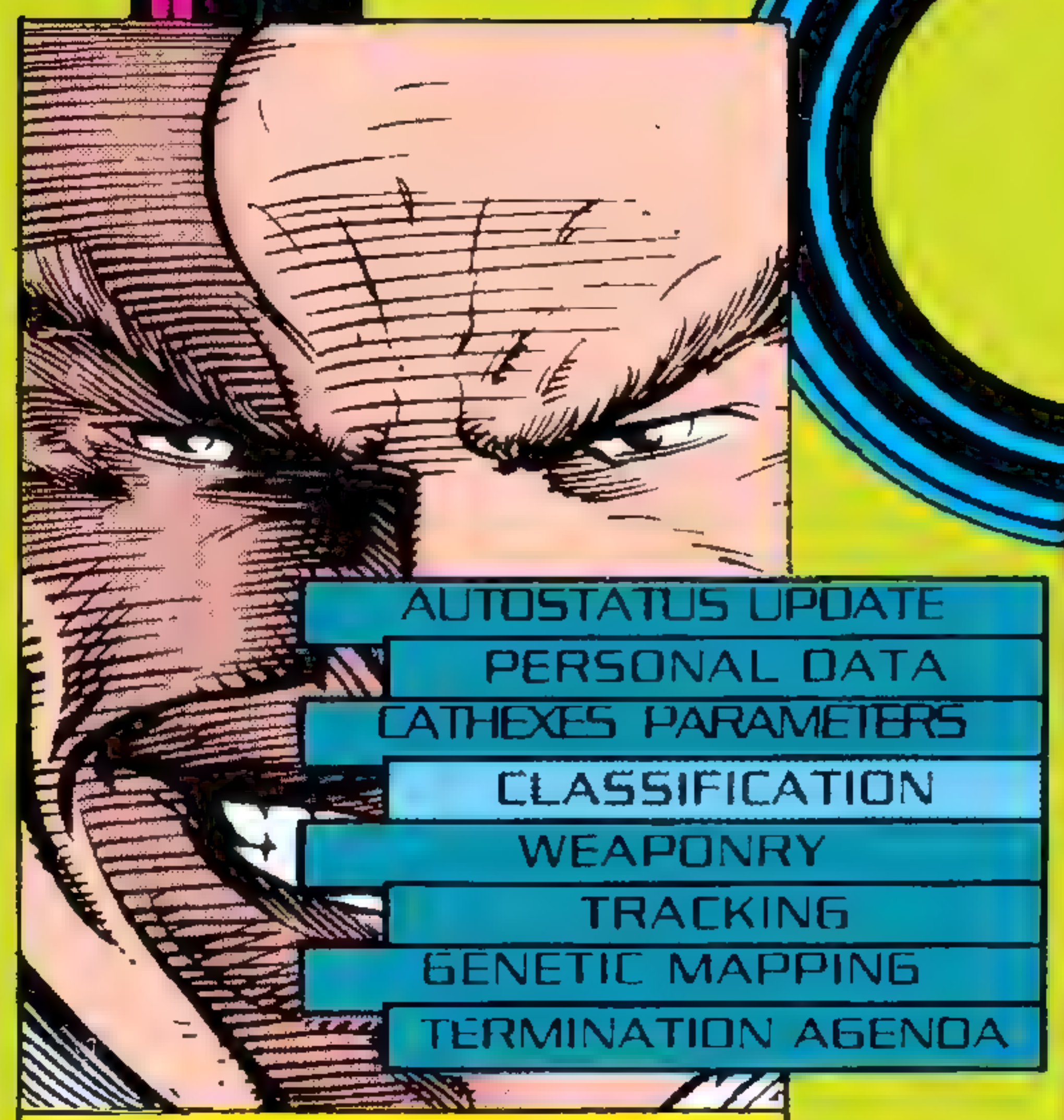


GIDEON A pawn was moved in 1492. A bishop slid diagonally across the board in 1776. A rook pulled the trigger in 1963. The chess game goes on and on. It is a game of immortals, where Gideon is never bored by the eternal machinations.

He is known throughout the world as a gaudy businessman, the "Ziggy Stardust" of the corporate boardroom. He is known to a mere handful as a powerful mutant, whose very power is to use someone's paragenetic abilities against him. And he is known to merely ten fingers or so, on the hand of destiny which envelops this planet, as a High Lord. An External. A mutant immmortal who has manipulated the course of history to suit his needs for countless centuries.

What is the purpose of their game? They seek power, wealth, the ascension to a self-perceived throne of achievement. They play the game against each other and the world. Will there ever be a winner? A different one for every potential timeline which exists. In mine, it was the Egyptian, in another, who could say?

In this timeline, who shall claim victory? In many ways, I shall indirectly determine the outcome through the legacy I leave them. In this timeline, maybe *none* of them shall emerge victorious — because, with even a smattering of luck on my side — there shall be none left alive to win!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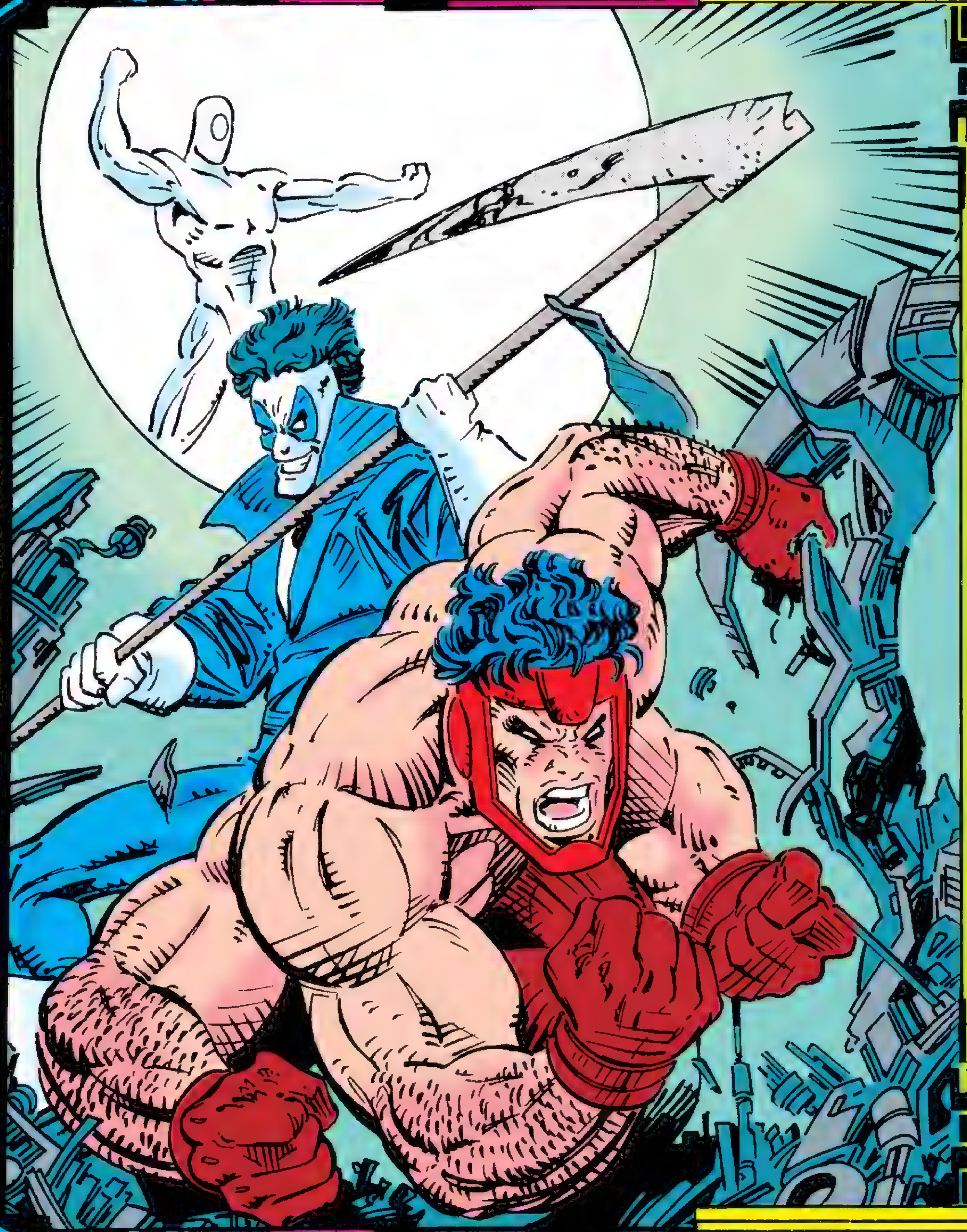


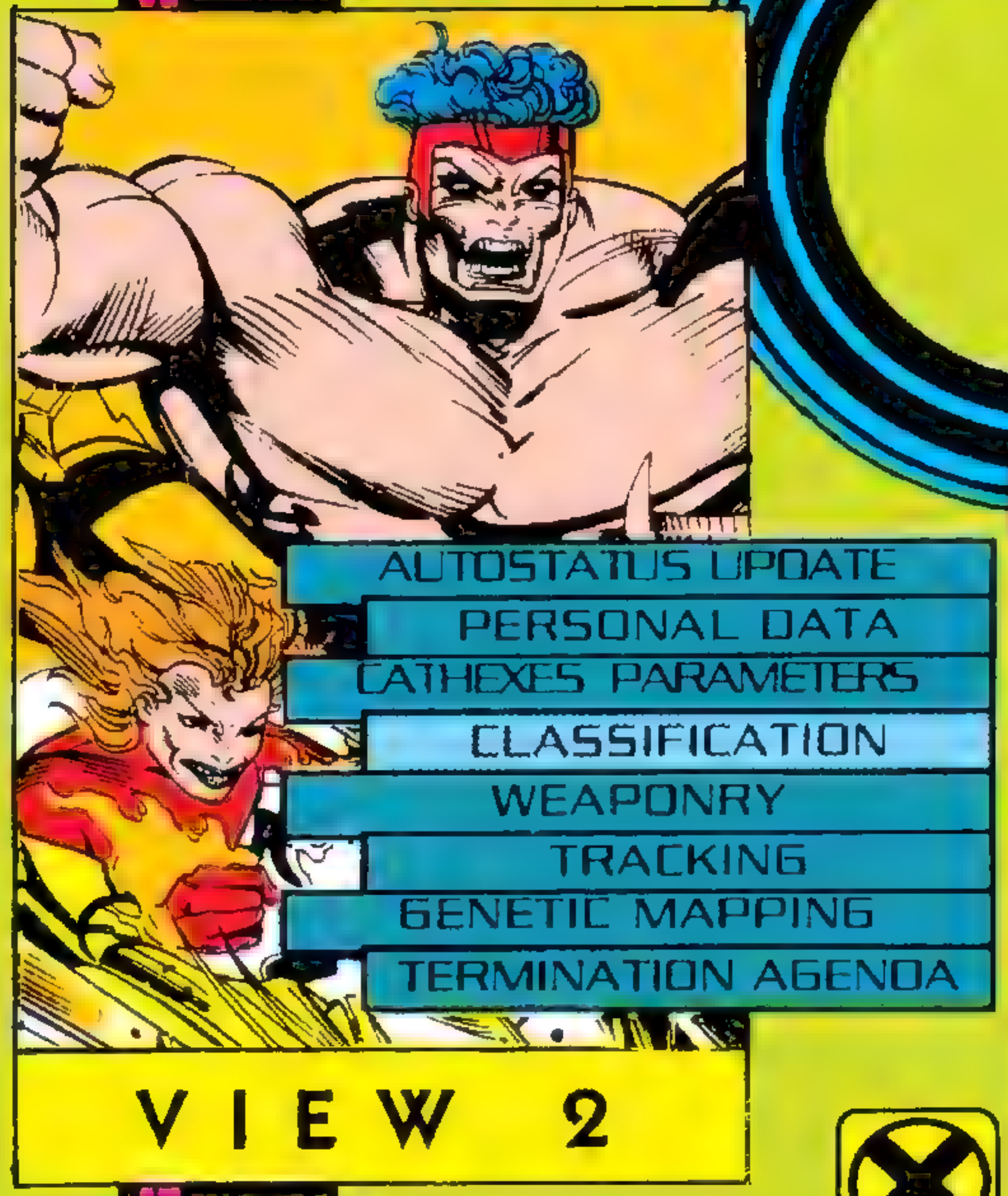
MUTANT LIBERATION FRONT

What does a general say to his troops when he knows they are being led on a suicide mission? How does his conscience twist and turn in the darkness of the night, the bedsheets soaked in guilt and uncertainty?

I have gathered this unit from the corners of the Earth, coerced, cajoled and connived to have them believe in a cause which meant nothing to me.

Now I watch them march to their deaths — or worse — the crushing of their fighting spirit.

It bothers me. . .if only for a moment . . .but time has a way of blanketing all wounds in its soothing embrace. And in time. . .I won't care. . .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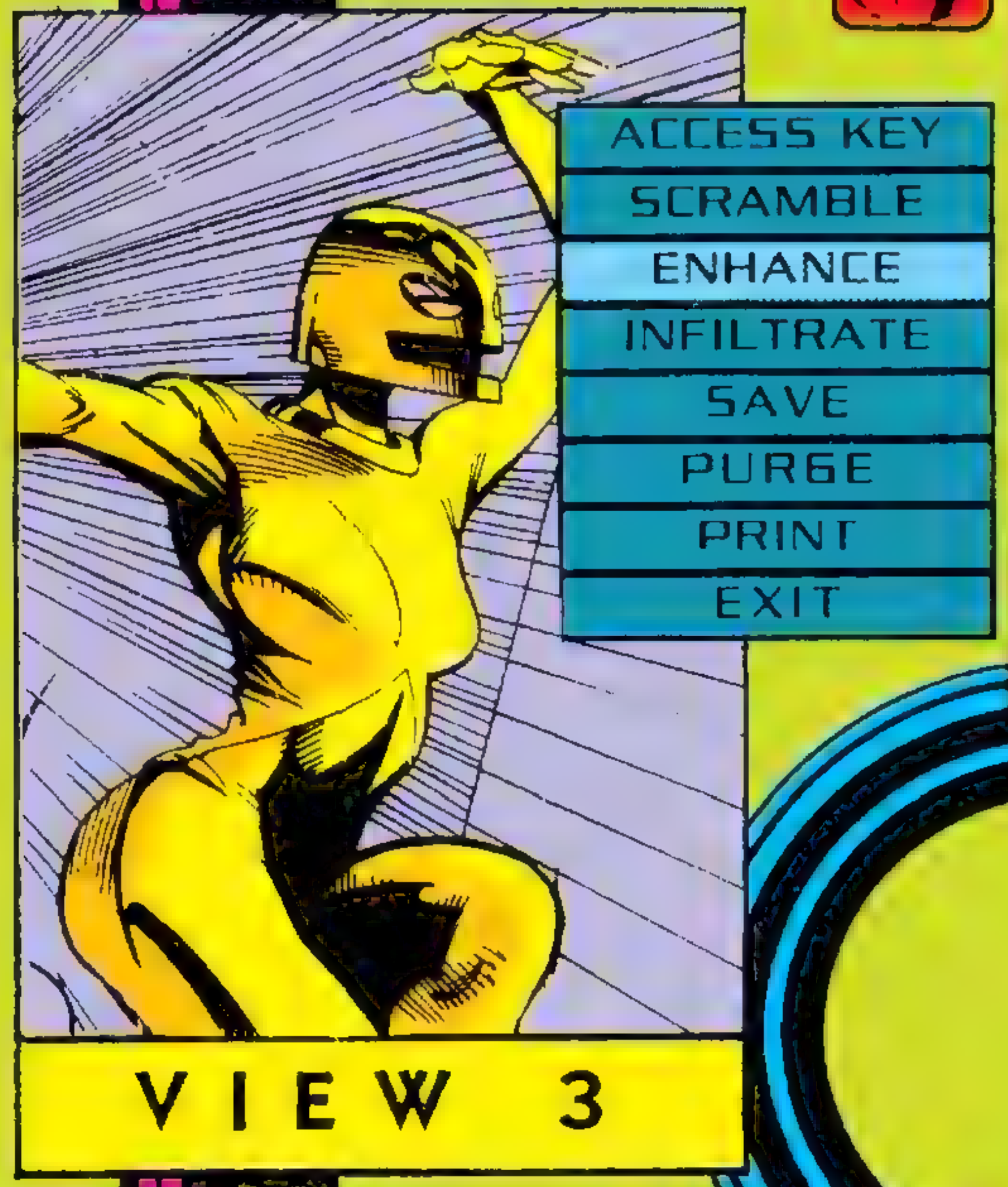
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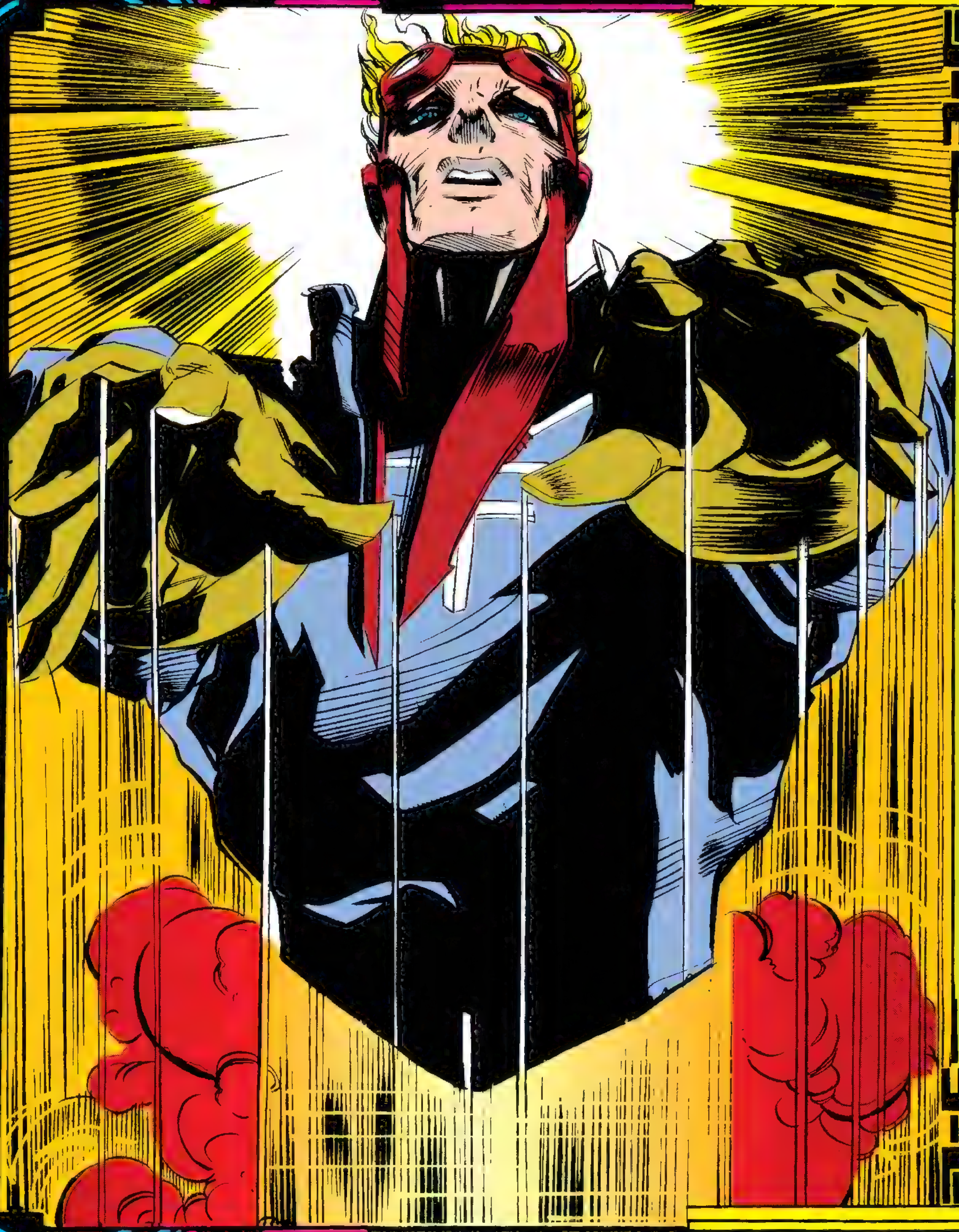


CANNONBALL The farm boy who would be King. The least likely to seek the mantle of savior is the one now forced to do so. Samuel Guthrie was not born into royalty, but died into it instead.

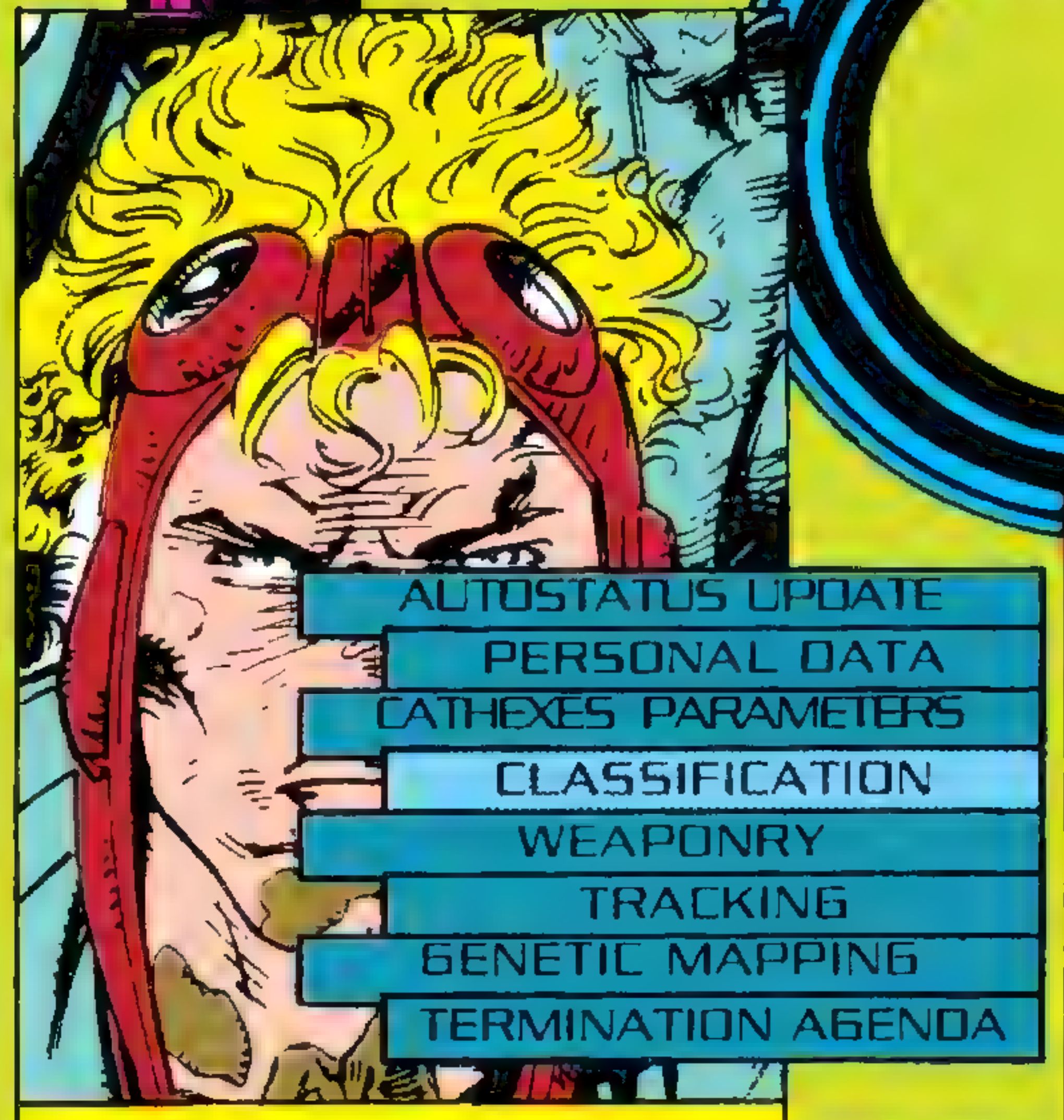
Cannonball is an External. The boy High Lord. A mutant immortal whose immortality was only recently awakened when he was killed by the lizard-man, Sauron. As such, Sam will never die, though he most assuredly can be killed.

How will this child handle this taxing burden? To know he will outlive his friends and family, to know he may be responsible for the safety of mutants for generations to come?

As few might expect, he has assumed the mantle of leadership over Cable's ragamuffin band of renegades with not the slightest of hesitancy. The one who was always the least secure about his mutant abilities and had the least control over them, is now in charge of tomorrow's genetic-nuclear arsenal.

It should not come as much of a surprise, for after all, the child has grown from adolescence into adulthood under the tutelage of two men's dreams — Charles Xavier and Nathan Dayspring Askani'son — the former a preacher of the open hand, the latter of the closed fist.

From these extremes, from these seemingly contradictory teachings, comes a mutant who may accomplish what *both* his "fathers" sought to do — establish a world where man- and mutant-kind can live together — by eradicating those who would harm them.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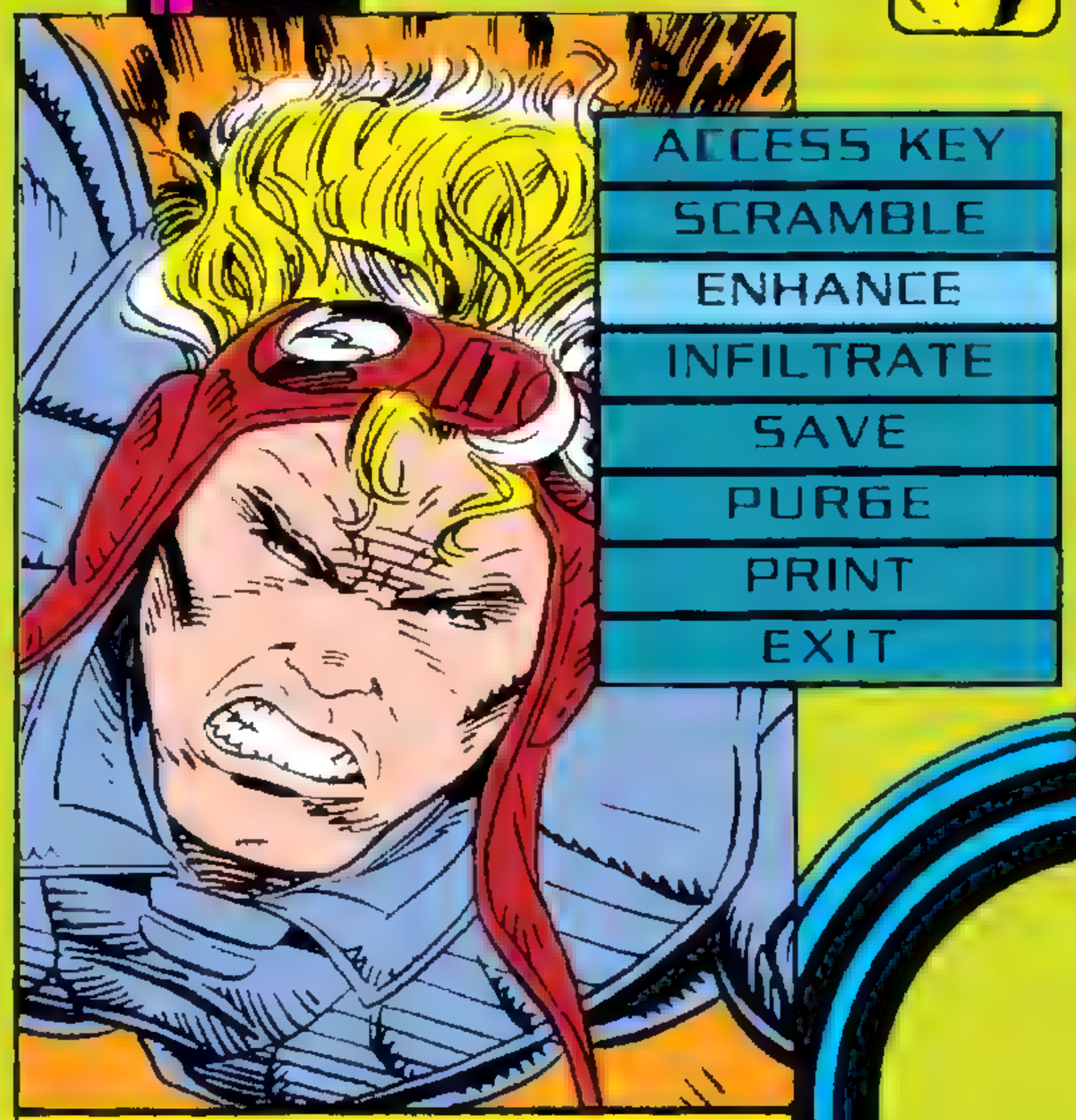
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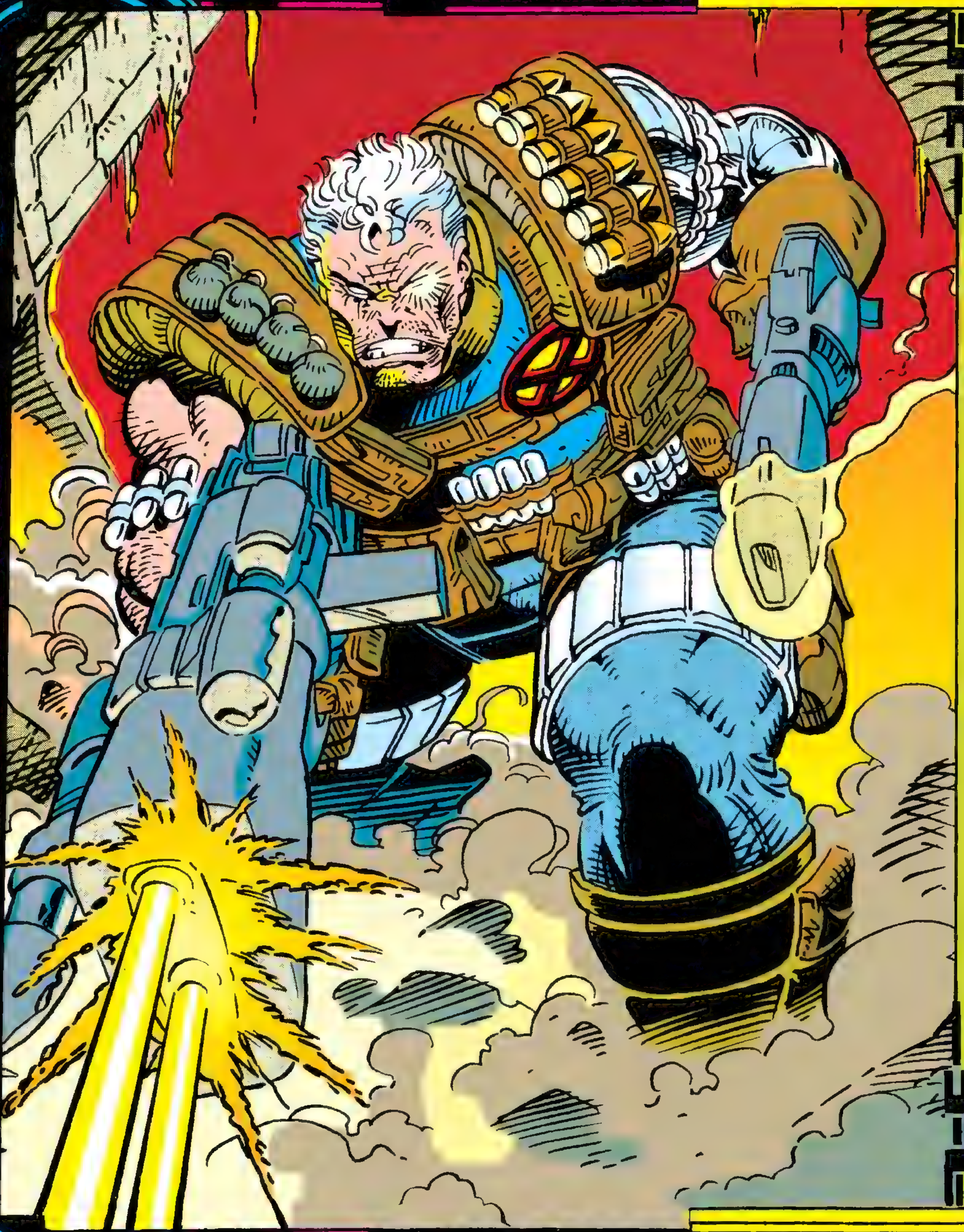

CABLE Play the game with me one last time, mirror-friend.

Run through time with me in race against the repetition of sins we've endured and caused over and over again.

See my reflection, mirror-foe, look at your face staring at you with scars carved in pain and hopelessness.

Sneer as the glint of metal catches your eye and ask yourself what you are fighting for. Humanity? Mutants? Tomorrow? Today? All illusions, as you of all people know. There is nothing to be gained by fighting. Your future is past. Your past is immutable.

There is only hatred to fuel us. Hatred to consume us. Hatred to engulf us.

Walk in the fire with me, Nathan. Let us burn together.

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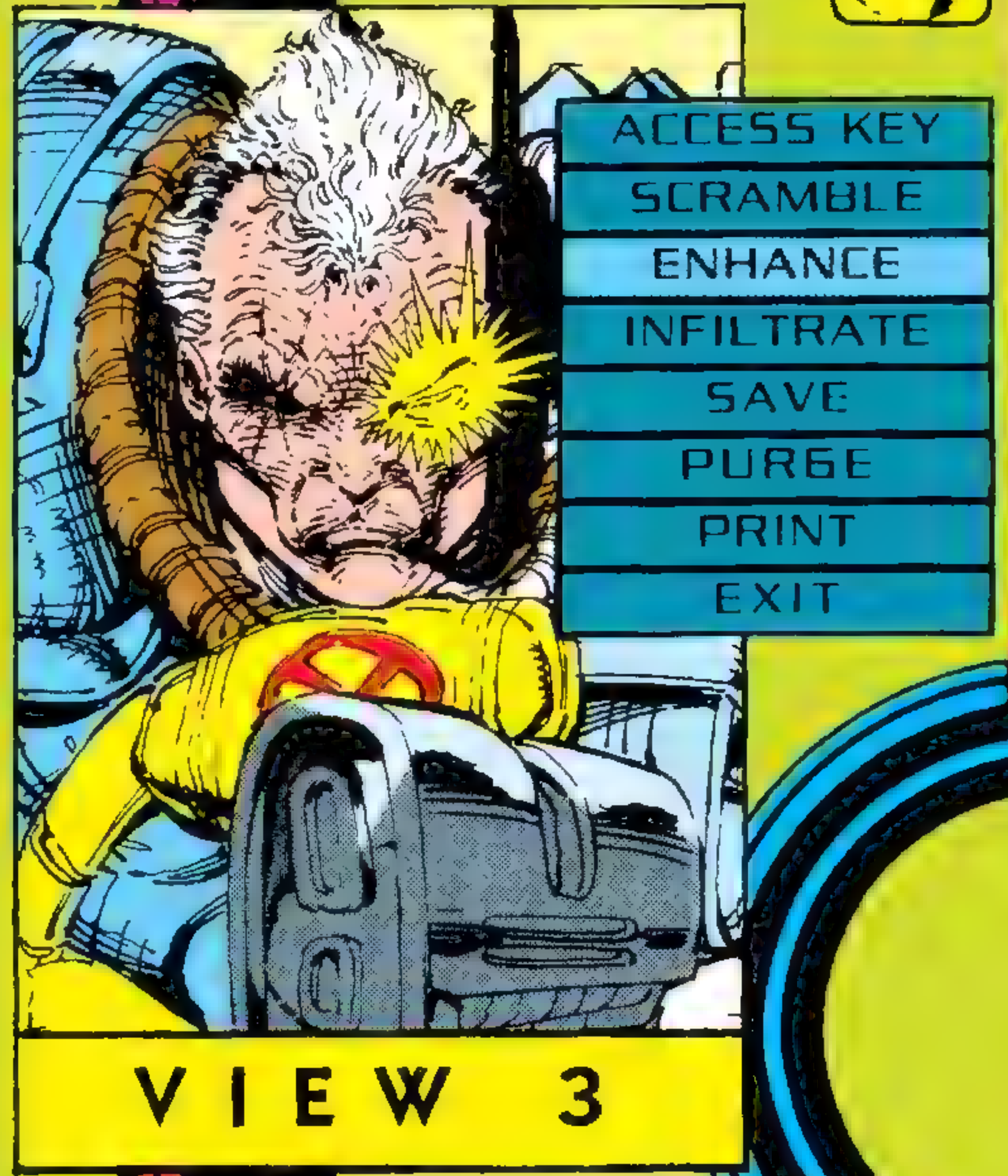
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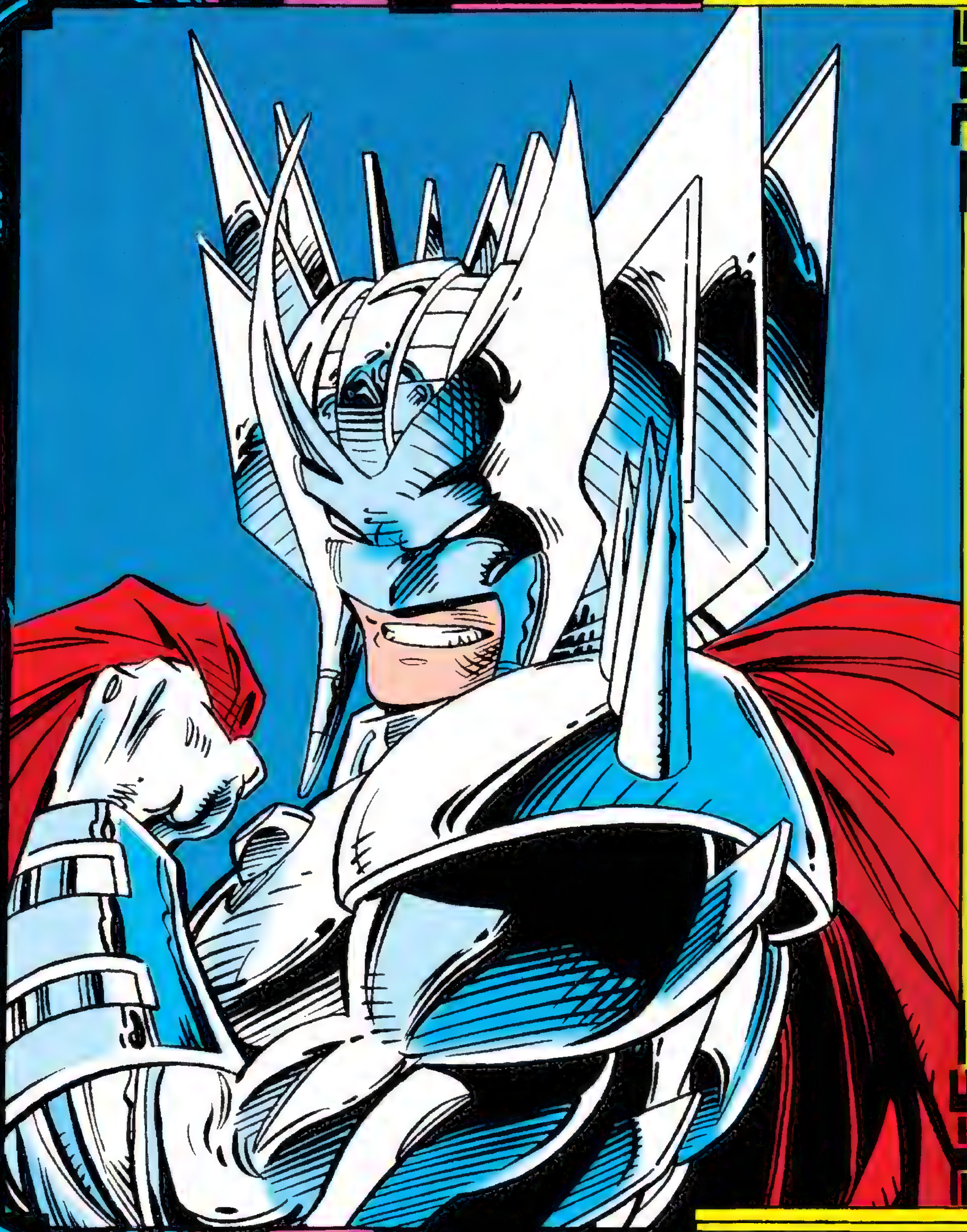


STRYFE The final move. White king against black king. Yet here, nothing but grey reigns supreme. Shades of grey, of uncertainty, insecurity, confusion, anger, love and hate.

Shades of me.

Shades of you.

Shades of them.

Let the final moves be made.

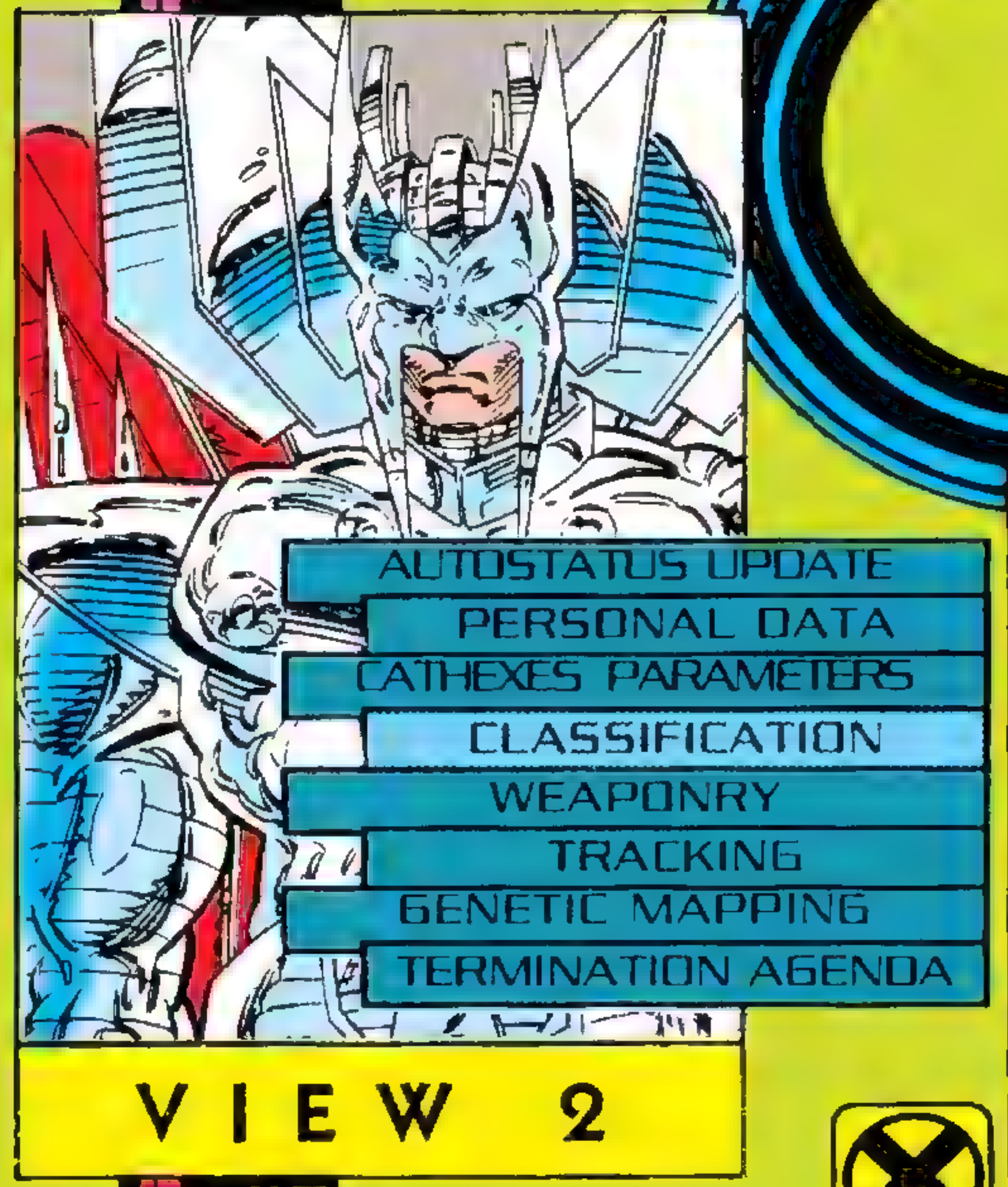
Let time determine the righteousness of my path.

I did it for only two reasons.

I did it because I hate you all.

And I did it, ultimately, because I hate myself. . .

. . .tomorrow, I will know if I was right or wrong. . .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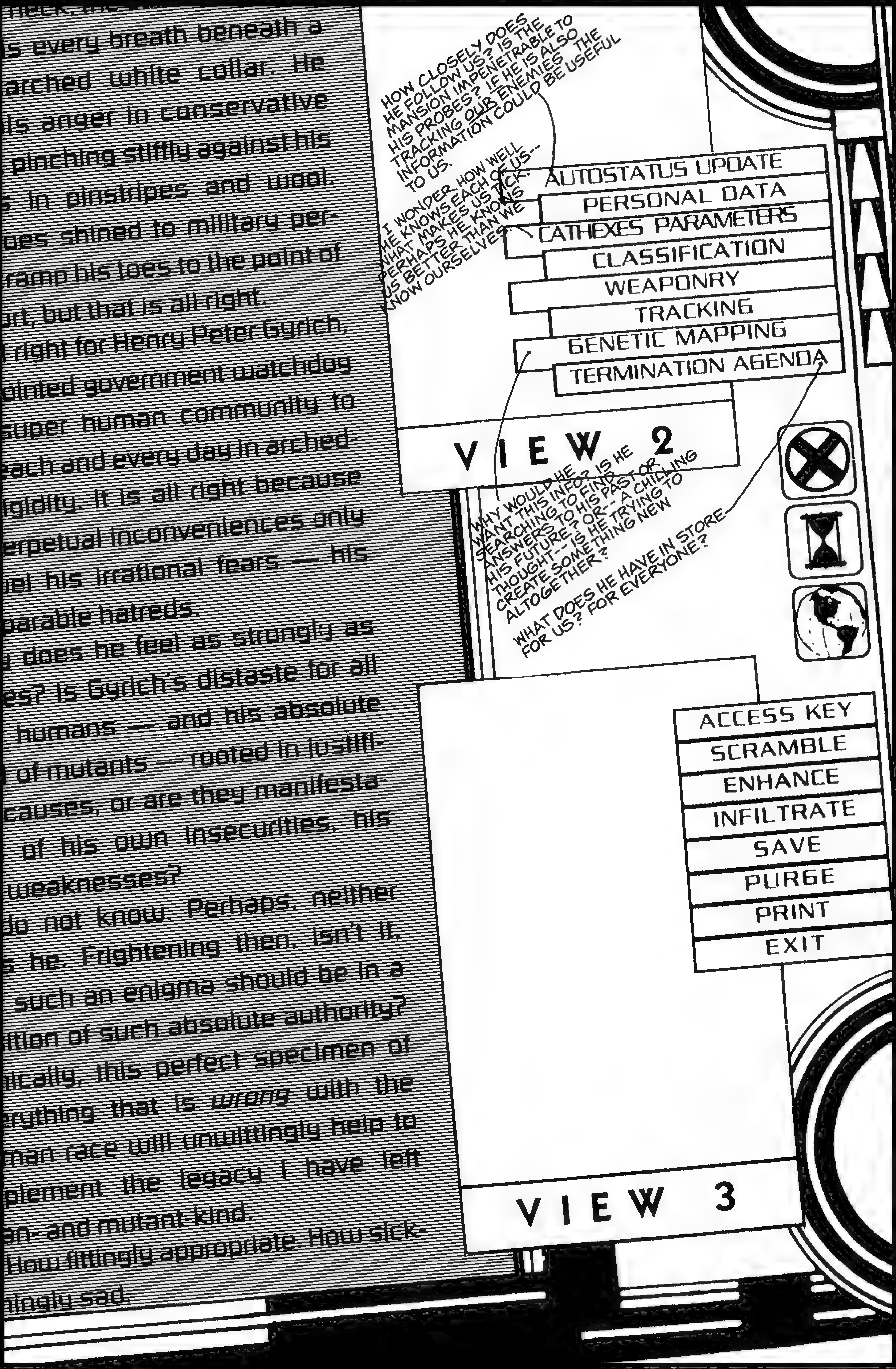
THE HARD-DRIVE SYSTEM WHIRRS ALONG QUIETLY--
END FILE
--TOO QUIETLY, FOR XAVIER CAN HEAR THE GEARS SHIFTING INSIDE HIS OWN MIND.
SCHEMES AND PLANS, MACHINATIONS AND DESIGNS...
STRYFE DIED, BUT MADE SURE TO LEAVE PLENTY OF GHOSTS IN THE MACHINE.
XAVIER SENSES THE APPROACH OF SCOTT SUMMERS AND JEAN GREY.
BOTH HAVE LEFT MUCH UNSPOKEN, BUT FOR A TELEPATH LIKE XAVIER, NOT UNSAID.
BOTH HAVE BEEN LEFT UNEASY BY THE EVENTS WHICH OCCURRED ON THE MOON DAYS AGO.
SHOULD HE GRANT THEM ACCESS TO THIS FILE? WOULD IT MAKE THINGS BETTER FOR THEM IF THEY KNEW THIS INFORMATION--OR WORSE?
PURGE FILE COMMAND ACTIVATED.
Do you wish to continue PURGE function?
Erasing Diskette
Purge File Activated
Diskette Erased
Purge File Completed
THE SOUND OF THE LEAVES FADE, THE WHIRRING OF THE MACHINE DIES DOWN, THE DRUMBEATS OF XAVIER'S NERVOUS HEART CONTINUE...
CHARLES--IS EVERYTHING ALL RIGHT?
A STACCATO DRUMBEAT, A RHYTHMIC POUNDING OF TENSION--THE EXECUTIONER'S SONG IS OVER--
IS THERE ANYTHING WE CAN GET YOU, PROFESSOR?
NO, SCOTT--JEAN--THANK YOU...
...I'M FINE...
...FOR NOW...
--AND XAVIER HEARS A NEW, DARKER SONG BEGIN...



neck, the
s every breath beneath a
arched white collar. He
is anger in conservative
pinching stiffly against his
s in pinstripes and wool.
oes shined to military per-
ramp his toes to the point of
ort, but that is all right.
right for Henry Peter Gyrich,
ointed government watchdog
super human community to
each and every day in arched-
igidity. It is all right because
erpetual inconveniences only
uel his irrational fears — his
parable hatreds.
does he feel as strongly as
es? Is Gyrich's distaste for all
humans — and his absolute
of mutants — rooted in justifi-
causes, or are they manifesta-
of his own insecurities, his
weaknesses?
do not know. Perhaps, neither
s he. Frightening then, isn't it,
such an enigma should be in a
ition of such absolute authority?
nically, this perfect specimen of
erything that is *wrong* with the
man race will unwittingly help to
plement the legacy I have left
an- and mutant-kind.
How fittingly appropriate. How sick-
ningly sad.

HOW CLOSELY DOES HE FOLLOW US? IS THE MANSION IMPENETRABLE TO HIS PROBES? IF HE IS ALSO TRACKING OUR ENEMIES, THE INFORMATION COULD BE USEFUL TO US.
I WONDER HOW WELL HE KNOWS EACH OF US-- WHAT MAKES US TICK. PERHAPS HE KNOWS US BETTER THAN WE KNOW OURSELVES?
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WHY WOULD HE WANT THIS INFO? IS HE SEARCHING TO FIND ANSWERS TO HIS PAST OR HIS FUTURE? OR-- A CHILLING THOUGHT-- IS HE TRYING TO CREATE SOMETHING NEW ALTOGETHER?
WHAT DOES HE HAVE IN STORE FOR US? FOR EVERYONE?
ACCESS KEY
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MARVEL COMICS
X-MEN
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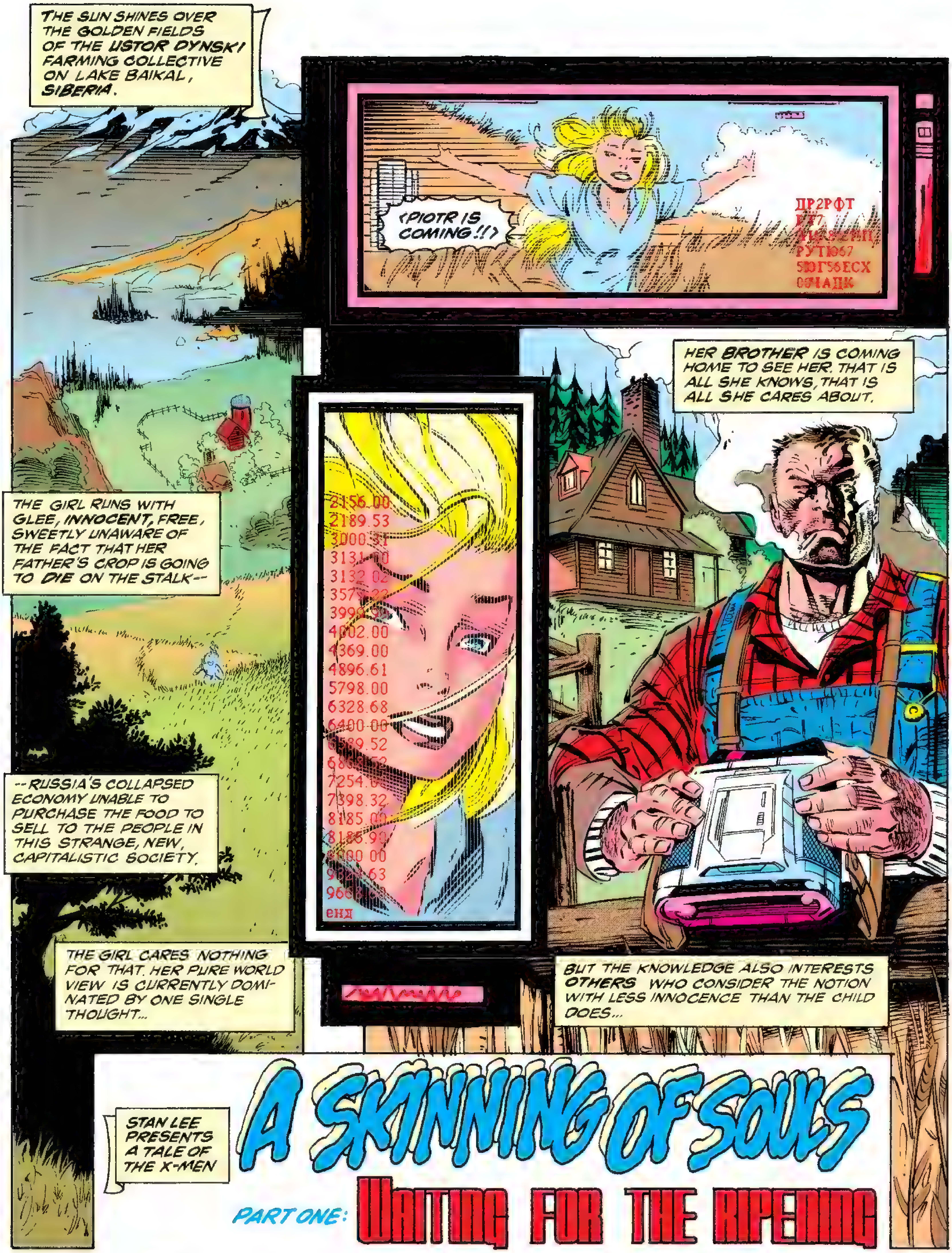
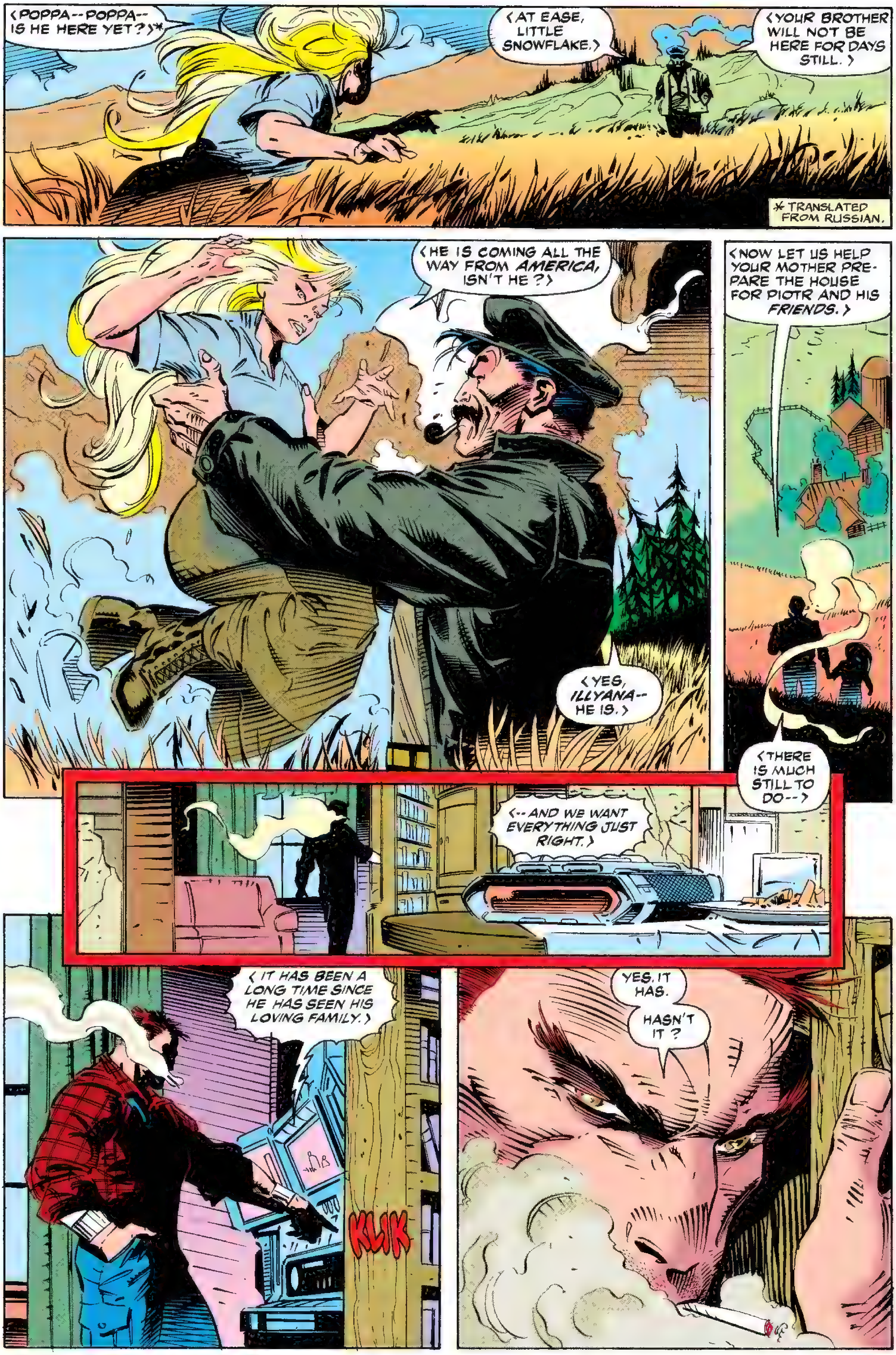
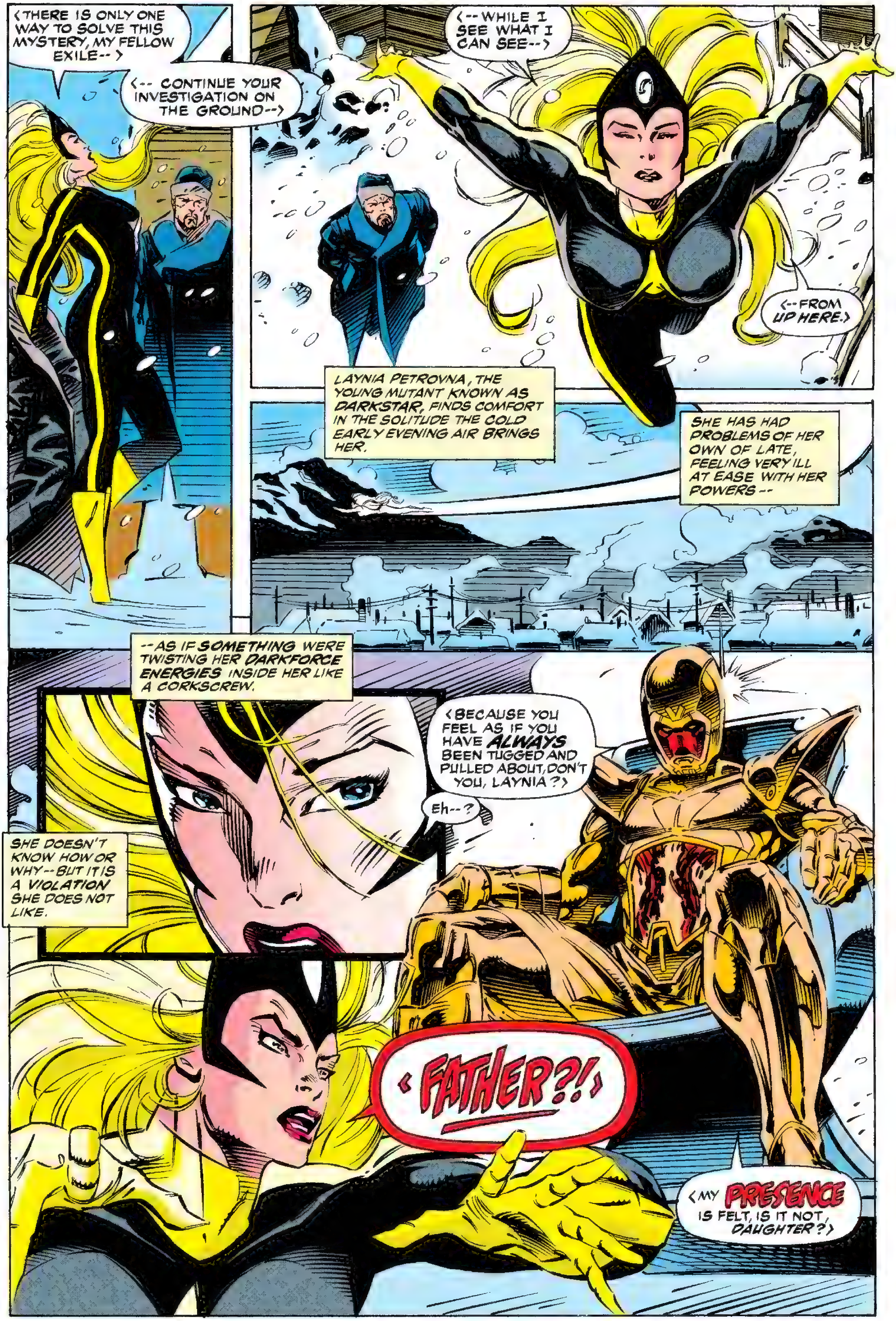
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
COMES THE SOUL SKINNER!
ANDY KUBERT
M. PENNINGTON 92

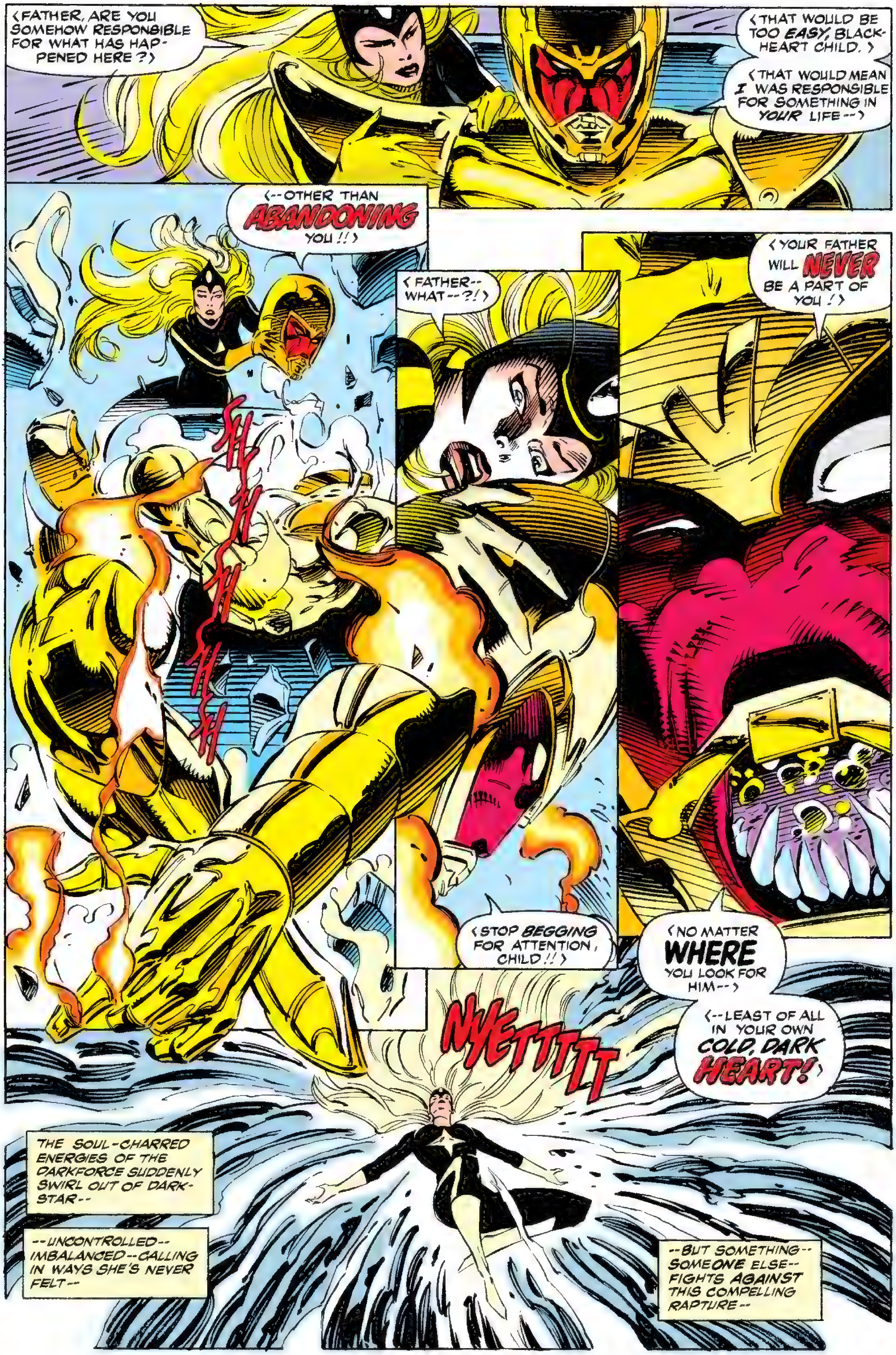

THE SUN SHINES OVER THE GOLDEN FIELDS OF THE USTOR DYNSKI FARMING COLLECTIVE ON LAKE BAIKAL, SIBERIA.
‹PIOTR IS COMING!!›
HER BROTHER IS COMING HOME TO SEE HER. THAT IS ALL SHE KNOWS, THAT IS ALL SHE CARES ABOUT.
THE GIRL RUNS WITH GLEE, INNOCENT, FREE, SWEETLY UNAWARE OF THE FACT THAT HER FATHER'S CROP IS GOING TO DIE ON THE STALK--
2156.00
2189.53
4369.00
4896.61
5798.00
6328.68
7398.32
енд
--RUSSIA'S COLLAPSED ECONOMY UNABLE TO PURCHASE THE FOOD TO SELL TO THE PEOPLE IN THIS STRANGE, NEW, CAPITALISTIC SOCIETY.
THE GIRL CARES NOTHING FOR THAT. HER PURE WORLD VIEW IS CURRENTLY DOMINATED BY ONE SINGLE THOUGHT...
BUT THE KNOWLEDGE ALSO INTERESTS OTHERS WHO CONSIDER THE NOTION WITH LESS INNOCENCE THAN THE CHILD DOES...
STAN LEE PRESENTS A TALE OF THE X-MEN
A SKINNING OF SOULS
PART ONE: WAITING FOR THE RIPENING

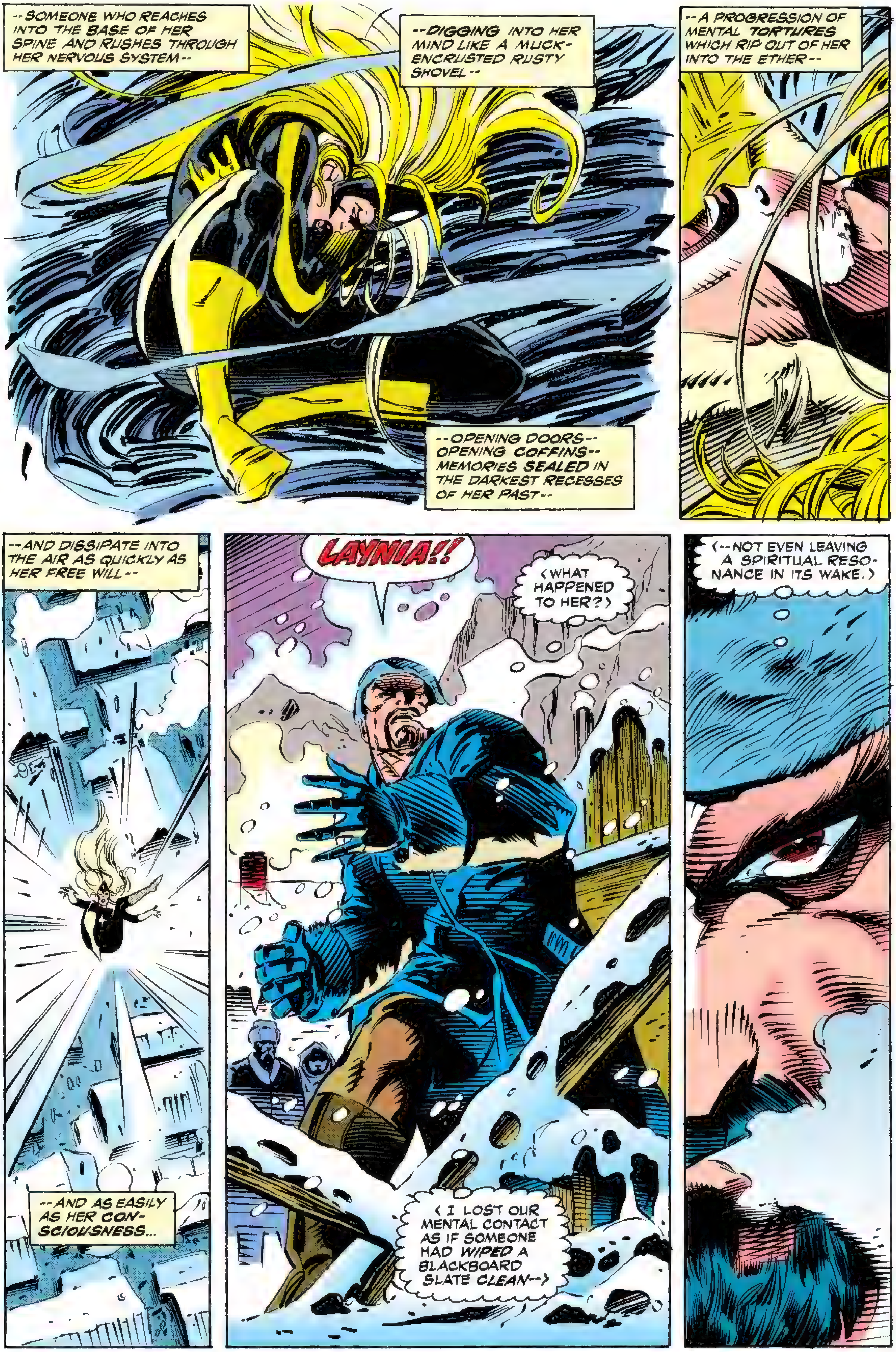
FABIAN NICIEZA WRITER · ANDY KUBERT PENCILER · MARK PENNINGTON INKER · CHRIS ELIOPOULOS LETTERER · JOE ROSAS COLORIST · BOB HARRAS EDITOR · TOM DeFALCO EDITOR IN CHIEF

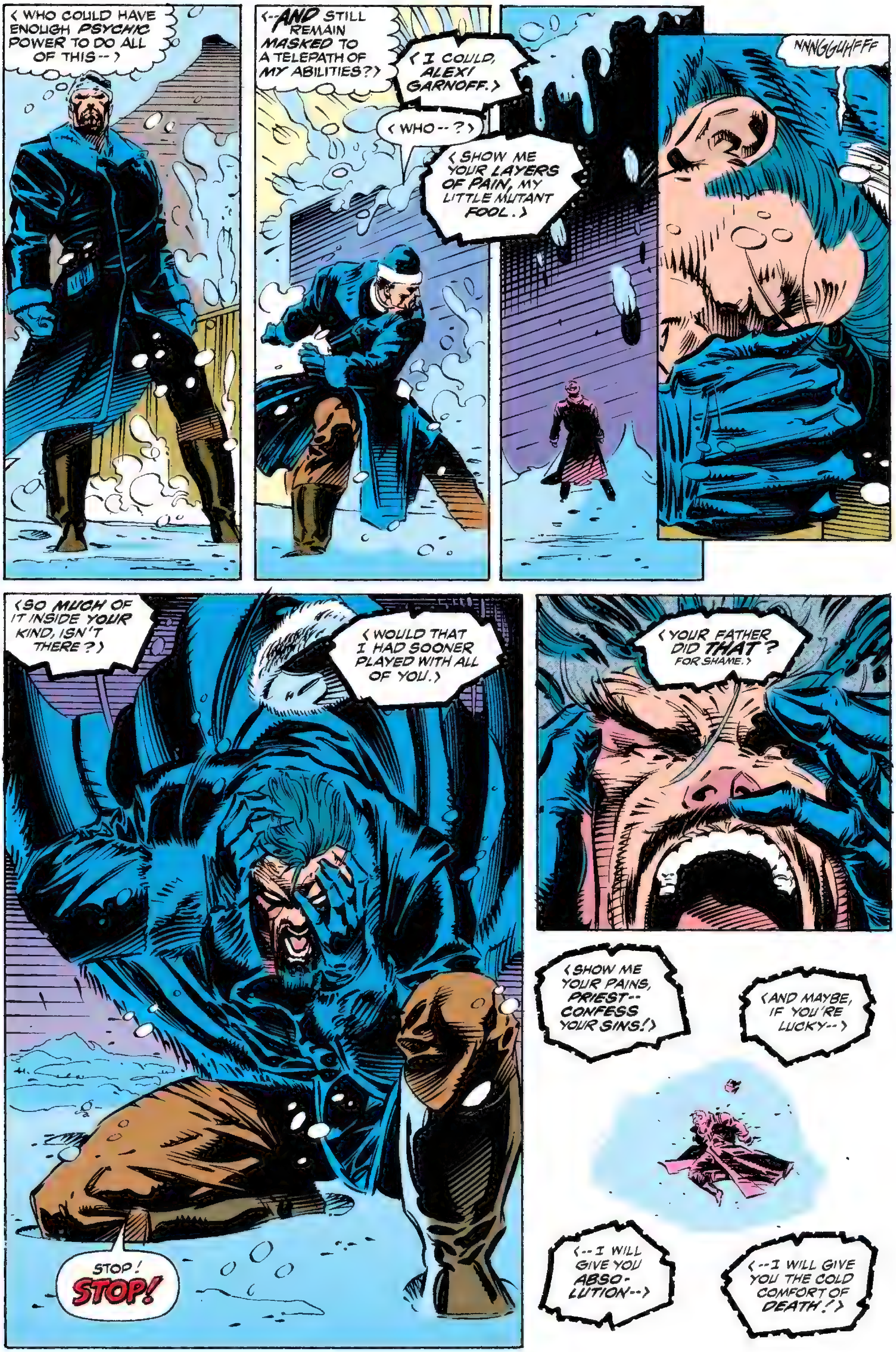

‹POPPA--POPPA--IS HE HERE YET?›*
‹AT EASE, LITTLE SNOWFLAKE.›
‹YOUR BROTHER WILL NOT BE HERE FOR DAYS STILL.›
*TRANSLATED FROM RUSSIAN.
‹HE IS COMING ALL THE WAY FROM *AMERICA*, ISN'T HE?›
‹YES, *ILLYANA*--HE IS.›
‹NOW LET US HELP YOUR MOTHER PREPARE THE HOUSE FOR PIOTR AND HIS *FRIENDS*.›
‹THERE IS MUCH STILL TO DO--›
‹--AND WE WANT EVERYTHING JUST RIGHT.›
‹IT HAS BEEN A LONG TIME SINCE HE HAS SEEN HIS LOVING FAMILY.›
KLIK
YES, IT HAS.
HASN'T IT?

A THOUSAND MILES TO THE NORTH, THE SIBERIAN OIL-RIG TOWN OF NEFTELENSK OFF THE LENA RIVER IS HOST TO TWO STRANGE VISITORS.
WHICH SEEMS APPROPRIATE, SINCE NEFTELENSK HAS BECOME A STRANGE TOWN...
<ODD.>
<BUT NOT SURPRISING, IS IT, ALEXI?>
<NO, LAYNIA, NOT SURPRISING, AT ALL-->
<--CONSIDERING I SENSED THE SYSTEMATIC ERASING OF THIS TOWN'S POPULATION FOR SEVERAL DAYS.>
<THEY SEEM--TURNED OFF--SOMEHOW.>
<IT IS MOST UNSETTLING.>
<I AM STANDING IN THE MIDDLE OF A CROWDED STREET, BUT OTHER THAN YOU-->
<I CANNOT SENSE THE PRESENCE OF A LIVING SOUL FOR MILES!>


‹THERE IS ONLY ONE WAY TO SOLVE THIS MYSTERY, MY FELLOW EXILE--›
‹-- CONTINUE YOUR INVESTIGATION ON THE GROUND--›
‹--WHILE I SEE WHAT I CAN SEE--›
‹--FROM *UP HERE.*›
LAYNIA PETROVNA, THE YOUNG MUTANT KNOWN AS **DARKSTAR**, FINDS COMFORT IN THE SOLITUDE THE COLD EARLY EVENING AIR BRINGS HER.
SHE HAS HAD PROBLEMS OF HER OWN OF LATE, FEELING VERY ILL AT EASE WITH HER POWERS--
--AS IF **SOMETHING** WERE TWISTING HER **DARKFORCE ENERGIES** INSIDE HER LIKE A CORKSCREW.
‹BECAUSE YOU FEEL AS IF YOU HAVE ***ALWAYS*** BEEN TUGGED AND PULLED ABOUT, DON'T YOU, LAYNIA?›
Eh--?
SHE DOESN'T KNOW HOW OR WHY--BUT IT IS A **VIOLATION** SHE DOES NOT LIKE.
‹FATHER?!›
‹MY **PRESENCE** IS FELT, IS IT NOT, *DAUGHTER?*›


‹FATHER, ARE YOU SOMEHOW RESPONSIBLE FOR WHAT HAS HAPPENED HERE?›
‹THAT WOULD BE TOO *EASY*, BLACKHEART CHILD.›
‹THAT WOULD MEAN *I* WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR SOMETHING IN *YOUR* LIFE--›
‹--OTHER THAN **ABANDONING** YOU!!›
SHHHHHHH
‹FATHER--WHAT--?!›
‹STOP *BEGGING* FOR ATTENTION, CHILD!!›
‹YOUR FATHER WILL **NEVER** BE A PART OF YOU!›
‹NO MATTER **WHERE** YOU LOOK FOR HIM--›
NYETTTTTT
‹--LEAST OF ALL IN YOUR OWN *COLD, DARK* **HEART!**›
THE SOUL-CHARRED ENERGIES OF THE DARKFORCE SUDDENLY SWIRL OUT OF DARKSTAR--
--UNCONTROLLED--IMBALANCED--CALLING IN WAYS SHE'S NEVER FELT--
--BUT SOMETHING--*SOMEONE* ELSE--FIGHTS *AGAINST* THIS COMPELLING RAPTURE--


--SOMEONE WHO REACHES INTO THE BASE OF HER SPINE AND RUSHES THROUGH HER NERVOUS SYSTEM--
--DIGGING INTO HER MIND LIKE A MUCK-ENCRUSTED RUSTY SHOVEL--
--A PROGRESSION OF MENTAL TORTURES WHICH RIP OUT OF HER INTO THE ETHER--
--OPENING DOORS-- OPENING COFFINS-- MEMORIES SEALED IN THE DARKEST RECESSES OF HER PAST--
--AND DISSIPATE INTO THE AIR AS QUICKLY AS HER FREE WILL--
--AND AS EASILY AS HER CONSCIOUSNESS...
LAYNIA!!
‹WHAT HAPPENED TO HER?›
‹I LOST OUR MENTAL CONTACT AS IF SOMEONE HAD WIPED A BLACKBOARD SLATE CLEAN--›
‹--NOT EVEN LEAVING A SPIRITUAL RESONANCE IN ITS WAKE.›


‹ WHO COULD HAVE ENOUGH PSYCHIC POWER TO DO ALL OF THIS-- ›
‹--AND STILL REMAIN MASKED TO A TELEPATH OF MY ABILITIES? ›
‹ I COULD, ALEXI GARNOFF. ›
‹ WHO--? ›
‹ SHOW ME YOUR LAYERS OF PAIN, MY LITTLE MUTANT FOOL. ›
NNNGGUHFFF
‹ SO MUCH OF IT INSIDE YOUR KIND, ISN'T THERE? ›
‹ WOULD THAT I HAD SOONER PLAYED WITH ALL OF YOU. ›
STOP! STOP!
‹ YOUR FATHER DID THAT? FOR SHAME. ›
‹ SHOW ME YOUR PAINS, PRIEST-- CONFESS YOUR SINS! ›
‹ AND MAYBE, IF YOU'RE LUCKY-- ›
‹--I WILL GIVE YOU ABSOLUTION-- ›
‹--I WILL GIVE YOU THE COLD COMFORT OF DEATH! ›

THREE DAYS LATER, RED SQUARE, MOSCOW...
<ARE YOU SURE ABOUT THIS, FYODR?>
<ABSOLUTELY, VAZHIN.>
<THE ENTIRE TOWN HAS BEEN CO-OPTED.>
<INITIAL REPORTS INDICATE TWO OF THOSE MUTIE RENEGADE EXILES WENT IN TO FIND OUT WHAT HAPPENED.>
<WHICH "MUTIES" WERE THEY, COLONEL-GENERAL SHATALOV?>
<WHO KNOWS? THEY'RE ALL THE SAME TO ME.>
<FYODR, YOU KNOW HOW I FEEL ABOUT THIS BIGOT...>
<SHATALOV IS IN CHARGE OF THE REMONT* PROGRAM, ALEXEI.>
* TWO GROUPS RESPRESENTING THE REMANDERS OF THE FORMER SOVIET SUPER SOLDIERS. --BOB-USHKA
<YES, I KNOW! AND YOU OF THE PEOPLE'S PROTECTORATE.*>
<ARE EITHER OF YOU PREPARED TO MOBILIZE YOUR FORCES TO HANDLE THE SITUATION IN NEFTELENSK?>
<HARDLY. REMONT IS NOT PERMITED TO WORK INTERNAL MATTERS-->
<--AND I DON'T FEEL LIKE LOSING MY GROUP!>
<SO YOU WANT SOMEONE EMINENTLY EXPENDABLE-->
<--WHO WOULD ONLY GO INTO A DANGER-ZONE FOR SELF-SERVING REASONS, RIGHT?>
<IT WILL REQUIRE SOME CONVINCING...>
<...BUT I WILL GET OMEGA RED FOR YOU.>

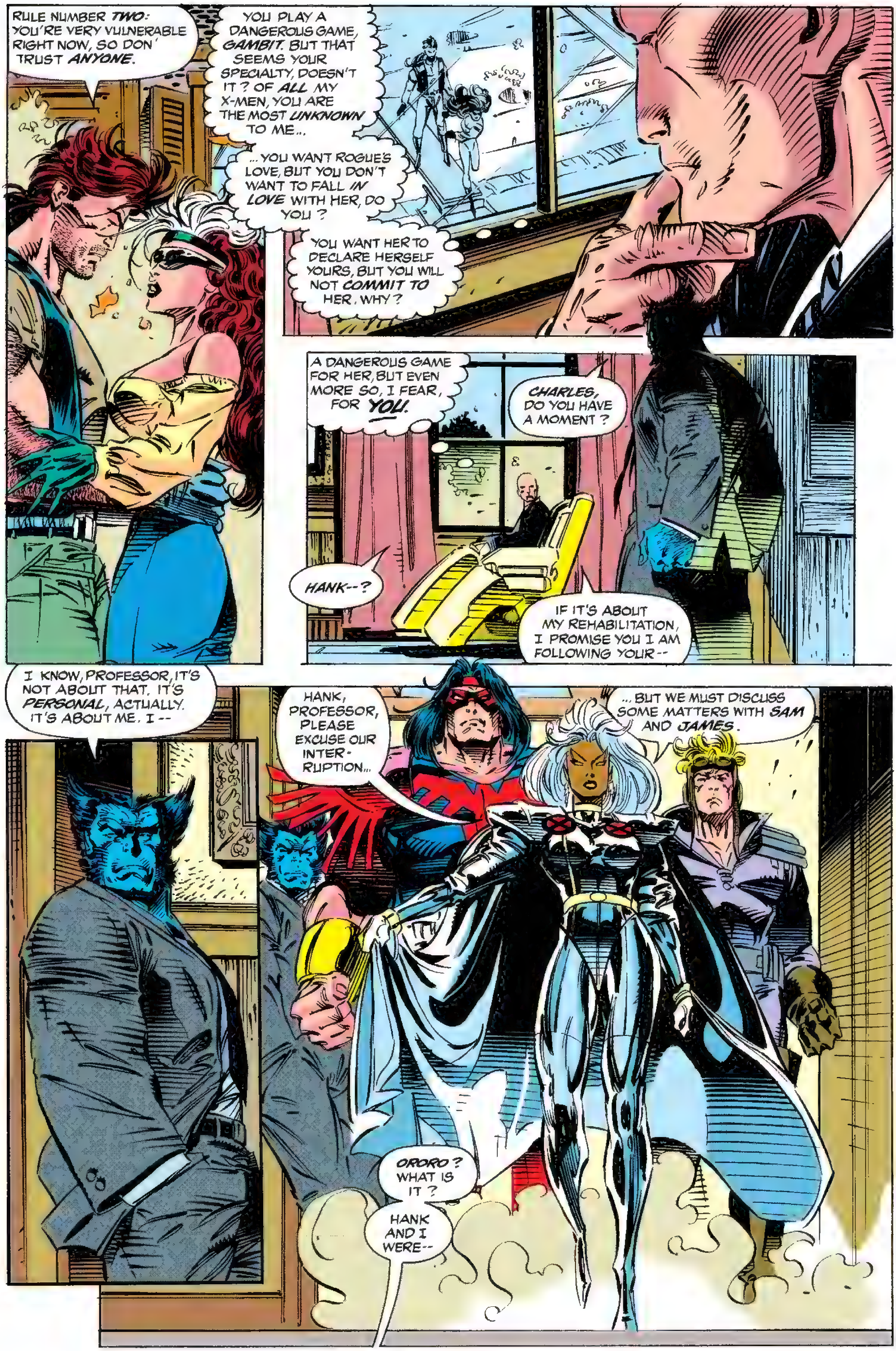
THREE DAYS PASS...
... AND THE BLACKBIRD CUTS LOW THROUGH THE RUSSIAN SKIES, UNDETECTED BY MILITARY SENSORS.
AND ABOARD THE SLEEK CRAFT, THE X-MEN FEEL THE COLD AND QUIET OUTSIDE THE BIRD OF PREY--
--MIRRORED BY THE MOOD INSIDE AS WELL.
PETER, WE'RE LESS THAN AN HOUR AWAY.
OUR ENCOUNTER AT TYURATAM NEARLY COST US AN ENTIRE DAY.*
MUCHO APOLOGIOS, NEXT TIME WE'LL LET WOLVIE WALK HOME, OKAY ?!
SORRY, NO OFFENSE MEANT, JUBILATION.
WE JUST HAD NO WAY OF CONTACTING PETER'S FAMILY TO TELL THEM WHY WE'RE LATE.
THEY ARE FAMILY. THEY WILL UNDERSTAND, SCOTT.
* SEE RECENT ISSUES OF WOLVERINE. -- BOB
RIGHT. FAMILY.
CYCLOPS...
MAYBE I JUST NEEDED TO GET AWAY FROM THE MANSION FOR A FEW DAYS, BETSY.
... AFTER EVERYTHING YOU'VE BEEN THROUGH...
... WAS IT REALLY NECESSARY FOR YOU TO COME ON THIS JOURNEY? PERHAPS YOU'RE PUSHING YOURSELF TOO HARD.
WITH X-FORCE STILL THERE AND ALL THE QUESTIONS CHURNING INSIDE ME ABOUT CABLE AND STRYFE--

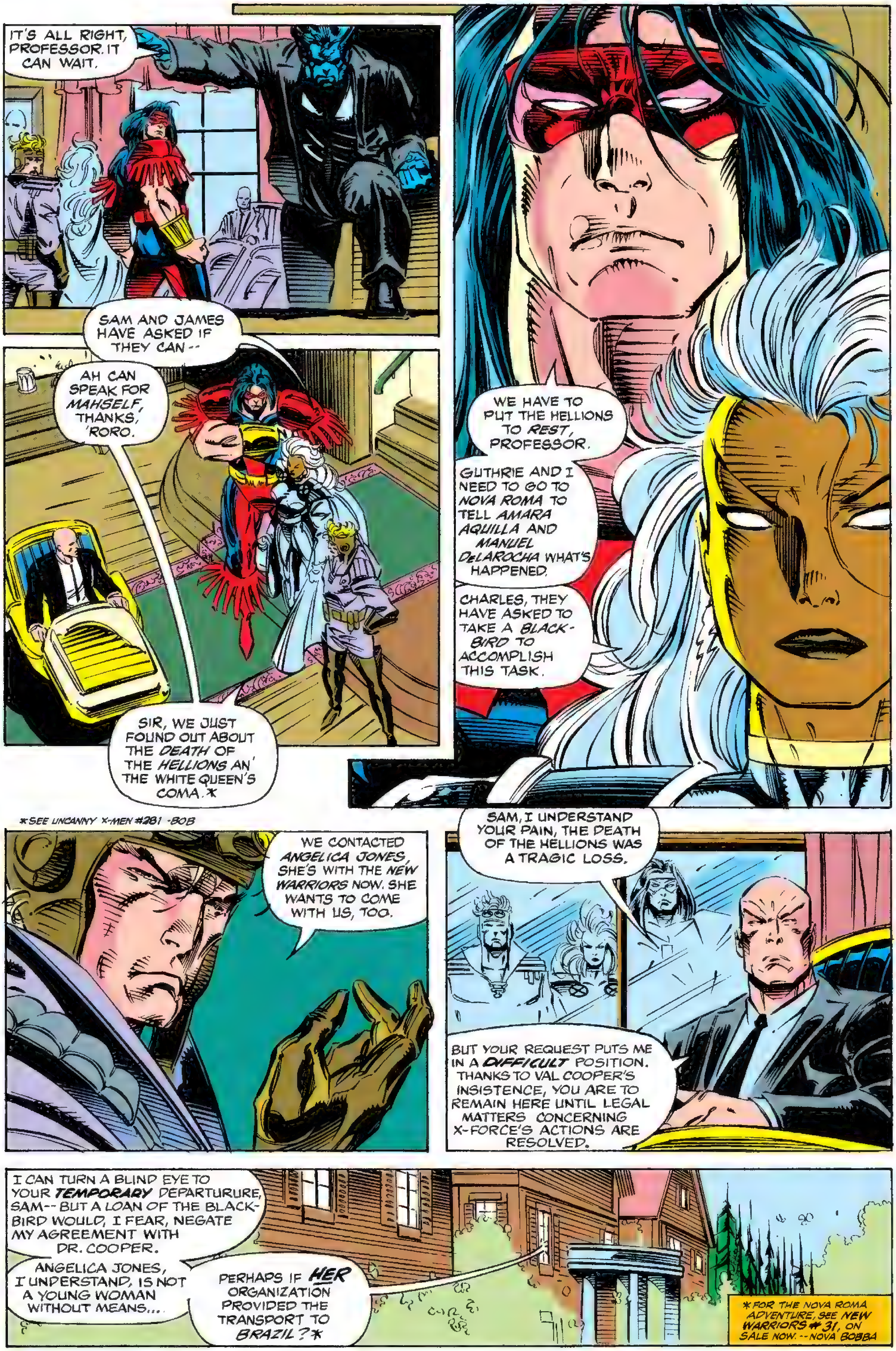
--I THINK I NEEDED SOME *SPACE*.
I NEEDED SOME TIME TO *THINK*.
--WHEN THE PERSON YOU LOVE IS A *TELEPATH*.
HMMM-- WHAT-- ?
I CAN IMAGINE.
IT MUST BE DIFFICULT TO MAINTAIN ANY *PRIVACY*--
OH--SORRY-- I WAS JUST-- THINKING--
YOU THINK TOO MUCH, SCOTT.
YOU SHOULD TRY ***DOING*** ONCE IN A WHILE.
;AHEM;
PEOPLE, LET'S CHANGE INTO CIVVIES, WE'RE COMING IN NOW.
I GUESS THIS IS IT, HUH, PETE?
NO MORE *AGONIZING* ABOUT TELLING YOUR PARENTS WHAT HAPPENED TO *MIKHAIL*--
--TIME TO JUST *DO IT*, RIGHT? YOU O.K. ABOUT THIS?
IN MANY WAYS, *BOBBY*, IT WILL BE A *RELIEF* TO DO SO.
TO UNBURDEN MYSELF OF THE GUILT AND FRUSTRATION--
--THAT HAVE BEEN BURNING MY SOUL SINCE MY BROTHER'S *SUICIDE*.

"ALL OF WHICH COMPOUNDS MY GUILT EVEN *MORE,* FOR I WILL BE RELIEVING *MYSELF* OF SUCH THOUGHTS--
‹THEY ARE HERE.›
"--BY FOISTING THEM ON MY *FAMILY* INSTEAD..."
‹ALEXANDRA, LOOK AT THAT *CAR!* IT MUST COST TEN YEARS' SALARY!›
‹NIKOLAI-- *HUSH*-- DON'T CONCERN YOURSELF WITH SUCH MATTERS! OUR SON IS BACK, FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE!›
PIOTR! **PIOTR!**
‹LITTLE SNOW-FLAKE!›
‹IT IS SO *GOOD* TO SEE YOU AGAIN!›
‹YOU'VE GROWN SO *MUCH,* HAVEN'T YOU?›
‹DON'T LET GO, PIOTR! NEVER LET GO!›
‹NEVER, ILLYANA, NEVER!›
‹PAPA-- MAMA--›
‹--I HAVE BEEN GONE *TOO* LONG.›

‹YES, PIOTR, WE THOUGHT YOU *FORGOT* ALL ABOUT US.›
‹YOU SOUNDED SO UPSET ON THE PHONE. IS EVERYTHING ALL RIGHT?›
‹I HAVE... *THINGS* I MUST TELL YOU, BUT NOW IS NOT YET THE TIME.›
‹COME, LET ME INTRODUCE YOU TO MY FRIENDS...›
‹...MY *AMERICAN FAMILY.*›
‹AMERICAN "FAMILY"--?›
‹INDEED.›
‹MUTANT FOMENTERS OF *DISSENT,* MORE LIKELY. LET ME GET A VISUAL.›
VMMMM
‹INTERESTING.›
‹THIS IS *FLAGWATCH #133...*›
‹...I NEED TO SPEAK WITH COLONEL VAZHIN *IMMEDIATELY...*›

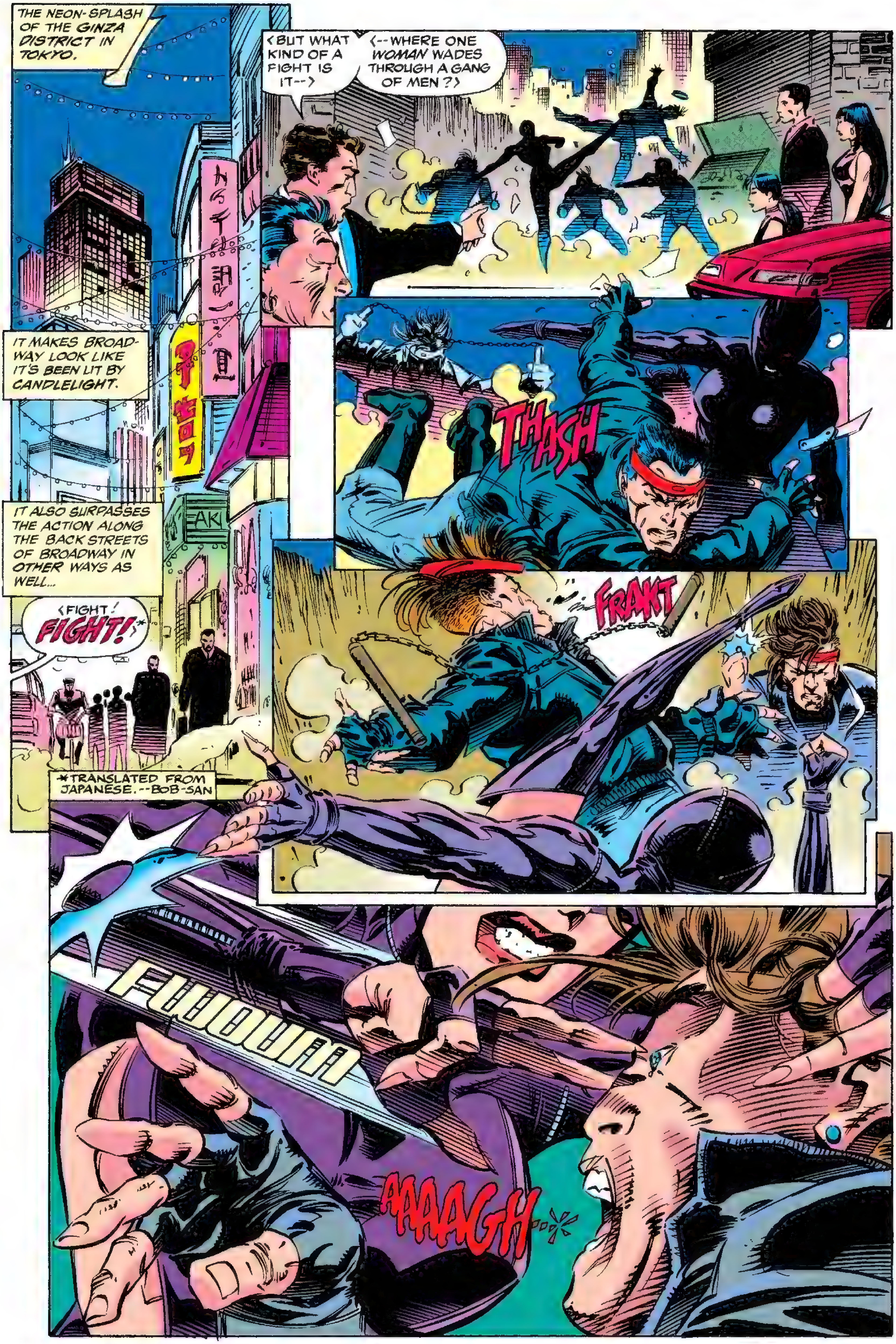
PROFESSOR XAVIER'S SCHOOL FOR GIFTED YOUNGSTERS IN WESTCHESTER, NEW YORK...
YOU ACTUALLY EXPECT *ME* TA TRUST *YOU*--?!
YUP.
THE BEAST SAID IT'S STILL GON' TAKE YOU A WEEK'RE TWO 'FORE YOU CAN *SEE* CLEARLY AGAIN...
...SO'S I'M THINKIN' YOU'RE GON' HAVE TO LEARN T'*DEPEND* ON THE PEOPLE WHO *CARE* 'BOUT YOU...
...T'HELP YOU THROUGH THIS, *ROGUE*.
OKAY, OKAY. BUT WALKIN' ON THE DIVIN' BOARD TILL YOU TELL ME TA STOP, *REMY*--
--AIN'T MAH 'DEA OF HELPIN' ME LEARN TA COPE!
RULE NUMBER *ONE*: *TRUST* THE PEOPLE YOU CARE FOR.
NOW KEEP WALKIN'--Y'GOT ANOTHER FOOT'R TWO...
OKAY, OKAY...
--AAAH--
GOTCHA, CHERIE.

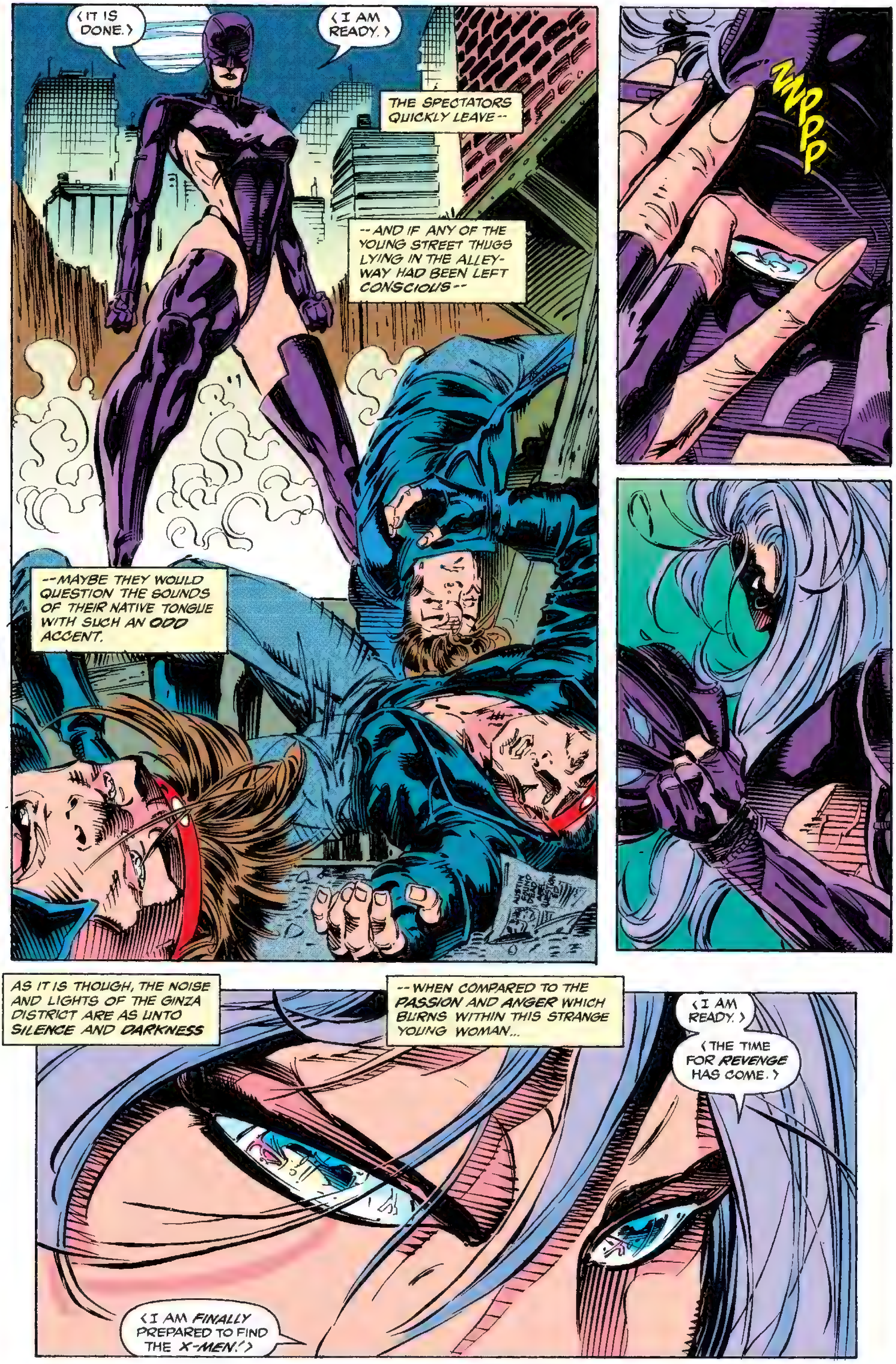

RULE NUMBER *TWO:* YOU'RE VERY VULNERABLE RIGHT NOW, SO DON' TRUST *ANYONE.*
YOU PLAY A DANGEROUS GAME, *GAMBIT.* BUT THAT SEEMS YOUR SPECIALTY, DOESN'T IT? OF *ALL* MY X-MEN, YOU ARE THE MOST *UNKNOWN* TO ME...
...YOU WANT ROGUE'S LOVE, BUT YOU DON'T WANT TO FALL *IN LOVE* WITH HER, DO YOU?
YOU WANT HER TO DECLARE HERSELF YOURS, BUT YOU WILL NOT *COMMIT TO* HER. WHY?
A DANGEROUS GAME FOR HER, BUT EVEN MORE SO, I FEAR, FOR *YOU.*
CHARLES, DO YOU HAVE A MOMENT?
HANK--?
IF IT'S ABOUT MY REHABILITATION, I PROMISE YOU I AM FOLLOWING YOUR--
I KNOW, PROFESSOR, IT'S NOT ABOUT THAT. IT'S *PERSONAL,* ACTUALLY. IT'S ABOUT ME. I--
HANK, PROFESSOR, PLEASE EXCUSE OUR INTERRUPTION...
...BUT WE MUST DISCUSS SOME MATTERS WITH *SAM* AND *JAMES.*
ORORO? WHAT IS IT?
HANK AND I WERE--


IT'S ALL RIGHT, PROFESSOR. IT CAN WAIT.
SAM AND JAMES HAVE ASKED IF THEY CAN--
AH CAN SPEAK FOR *MAHSELF*, THANKS, 'RORO.
SIR, WE JUST FOUND OUT ABOUT THE *DEATH* OF THE *HELLIONS* AN' THE WHITE QUEEN'S COMA.*
WE HAVE TO PUT THE HELLIONS TO *REST*, PROFESSOR.
GUTHRIE AND I NEED TO GO TO *NOVA ROMA* TO TELL *AMARA AQUILLA* AND *MANUEL DeLAROCHA* WHAT'S HAPPENED.
CHARLES, THEY HAVE ASKED TO TAKE A *BLACKBIRD* TO ACCOMPLISH THIS TASK.
WE CONTACTED *ANGELICA JONES*, SHE'S WITH THE *NEW WARRIORS* NOW. SHE WANTS TO COME WITH US, TOO.
SAM, I UNDERSTAND YOUR PAIN, THE DEATH OF THE HELLIONS WAS A TRAGIC LOSS.
BUT YOUR REQUEST PUTS ME IN A *DIFFICULT* POSITION. THANKS TO VAL COOPER'S INSISTENCE, YOU ARE TO REMAIN HERE UNTIL LEGAL MATTERS CONCERNING X-FORCE'S ACTIONS ARE RESOLVED.
I CAN TURN A BLIND EYE TO YOUR *TEMPORARY* DEPARTURURE, SAM-- BUT A LOAN OF THE BLACKBIRD WOULD, I FEAR, NEGATE MY AGREEMENT WITH DR. COOPER.
ANGELICA JONES, I UNDERSTAND, IS NOT A YOUNG WOMAN WITHOUT MEANS...
PERHAPS IF *HER* ORGANIZATION PROVIDED THE TRANSPORT TO *BRAZIL*?*

*SEE *UNCANNY X-MEN #281* -BOB

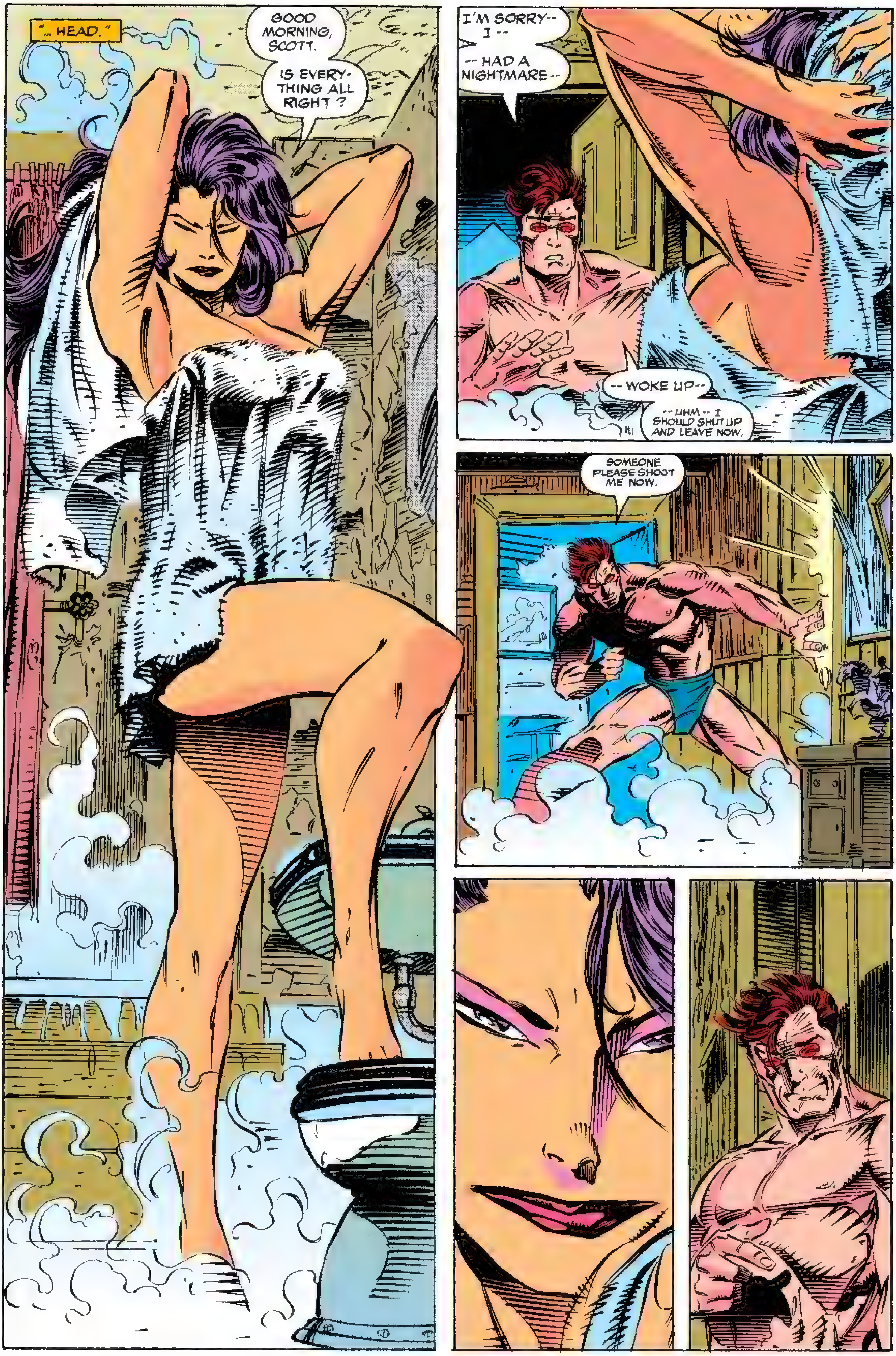
*FOR THE NOVA ROMA ADVENTURE, SEE *NEW WARRIORS #31*, ON SALE NOW. --NOVA BOBBA

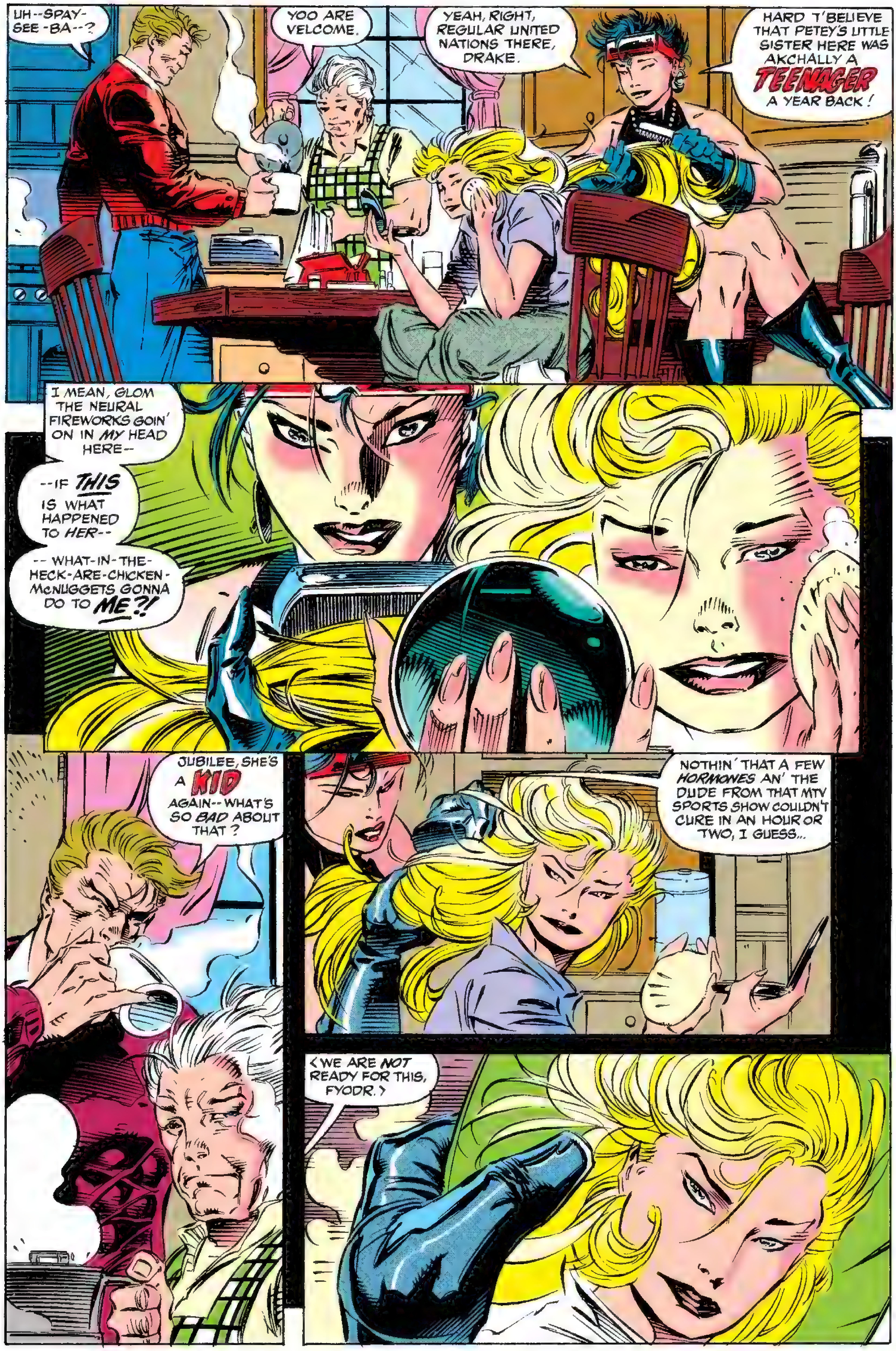

THE NEON-SPLASH OF THE GINZA DISTRICT IN TOKYO.
<BUT WHAT KIND OF A FIGHT IS IT-->
<--WHERE ONE WOMAN WADES THROUGH A GANG OF MEN?>
IT MAKES BROADWAY LOOK LIKE IT'S BEEN LIT BY CANDLELIGHT.
IT ALSO SURPASSES THE ACTION ALONG THE BACK STREETS OF BROADWAY IN OTHER WAYS AS WELL...
THASH
FRAKT
<FIGHT! FIGHT!>*
*TRANSLATED FROM JAPANESE. --BOB-SAN
FWOOMM
AAAAGH


‹IT IS DONE.›
‹I AM READY.›
THE SPECTATORS QUICKLY LEAVE--
--AND IF ANY OF THE YOUNG STREET THUGS LYING IN THE ALLEYWAY HAD BEEN LEFT CONSCIOUS--
--MAYBE THEY WOULD QUESTION THE SOUNDS OF THEIR NATIVE TONGUE WITH SUCH AN *ODD* ACCENT.
ZZPPP
AS IT IS THOUGH, THE NOISE AND LIGHTS OF THE GINZA DISTRICT ARE AS UNTO *SILENCE* AND *DARKNESS*
--WHEN COMPARED TO THE *PASSION AND ANGER* WHICH BURNS WITHIN THIS STRANGE YOUNG WOMAN...
‹I AM READY.›
‹THE TIME FOR *REVENGE* HAS COME.›
‹I AM *FINALLY* PREPARED TO FIND THE *X-MEN!*›

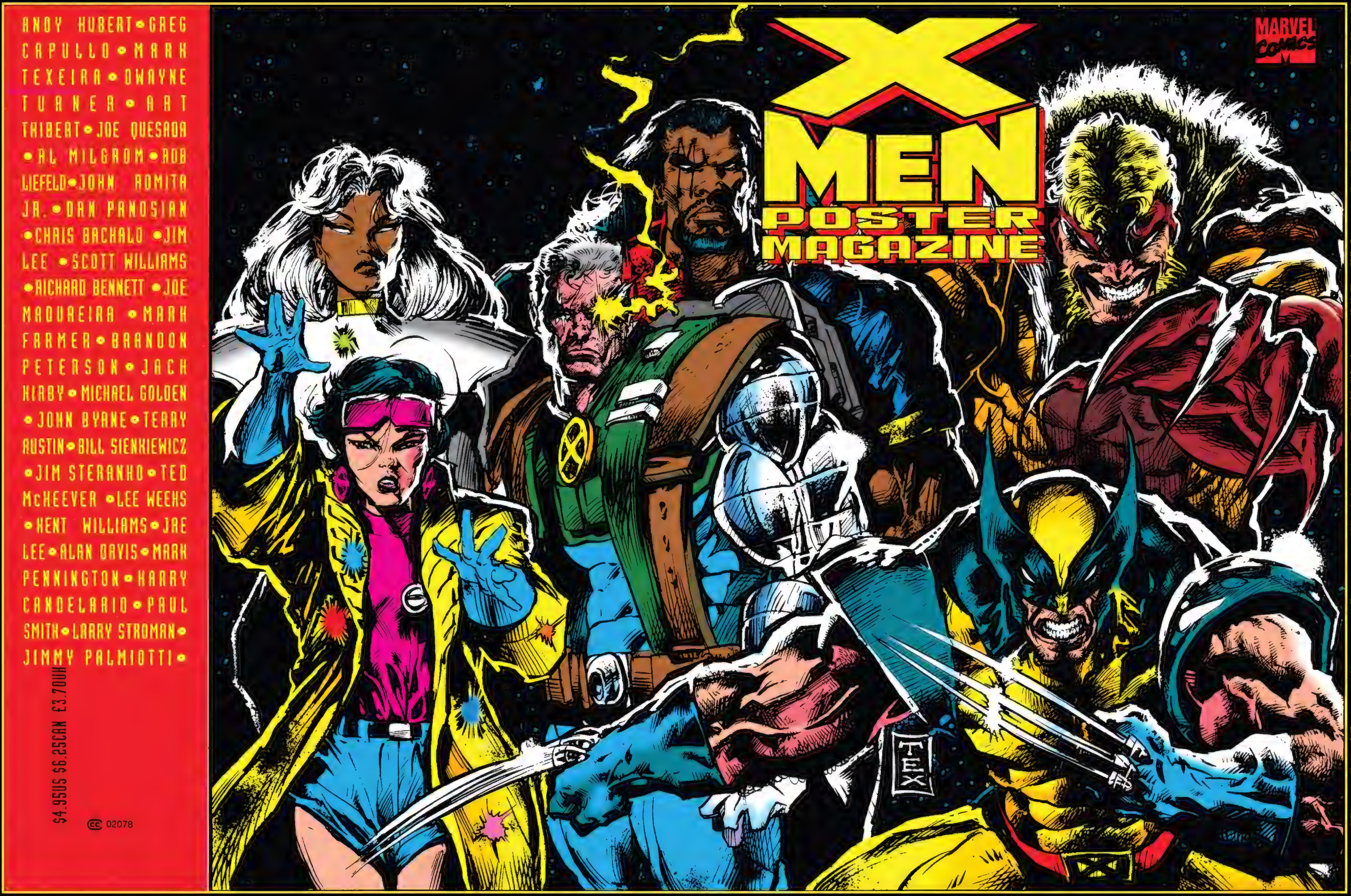
THE SUN RISES HARD ON THE SIBERIAN FARMING COLLECTIVE...
THAK THAK
...EVEN AS THE NIGHT COLD CLINGS TO THE MORNING, UNWILLING TO SURRENDER ITS HOLD.
THAK
EVEN SO, A SHEEN OF SWEAT ON PIOTR NIKOLEIVITCH, CLINGS TO THE SKIN OF HIS STRAINING MUSCLES LIKE A THIN LAYER OF ICE.
THAK
THAK
THAK
SO WHY'RE YOU OUT HERE SO EARLY BUSTIN' YOUR HUMP?
FSHSH
THANK YOU, LOGAN, FOR NOT SMOKING IN THE HOUSE.
IT TOOK MOTHER A *LONG* TIME TO CONVINCE FATHER TO STOP.
THOUGH SHE SUSPECTS HE STILL SNEAKS A CIGAR WITH HIS FRIENDS.
SHE SUSPECTS *RIGHT*.
THOUGH NOT TOO OFTEN, FROM THE SCENT OF IT.
YOU COULD TURN T' *METAL*, PETEY, AN' THAT ROOT'LL BE OUT IN A SECOND.
NOT *EVERYTHING* CAN BE SETTLED WITH MUTANT POWERS, MY FRIEND
SOMETIMES IT IS BEST TO WORK THROUGH A PROBLEM... IN *SMALL* STEPS... BY TAKING A *HUMAN* APPROACH...
NO ARGUMENT HERE.

THOUGH IF YOU WANTED TO THINK THINGS THROUGH, YOU COULD JUST AS EASILY HAVE BROUGHT OUT A PAD AN' PAPER AN' *SKETCHED*.
YOU HAVEN'T DRAWN IN A LONG TIME, HAVE YOU, PETER? NOT SINCE MIKHAIL.
NNmmFF
DID YOU EVER THINK THAT AFTER EVERYTHING WE HAVE DONE--
--EVERYTHING WE HAVE BEEN THROUGH--
--THAT OUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS AS X-MEN--
--HAVEN'T *NEARLY* JUSTIFIED OUR *PAIN* AND *LOSS*?
JUST 'CAUSE *WE'VE* SAVED THE WORLD A COUPLE DOZEN TIMES OVER--
--DOESN'T MEAN THE WORLD'S RESPONSIBLE FOR SAVIN' *US*.
SOMETIMES, I WONDER...
...IF LEAVING HERE TO FOLLOW ANOTHER MAN'S DREAM, NO MATTER HOW NOBLE--
--WAS NOT THE SINGLE *WORST* CHOICE OF MY LIFE.
STRYFE-- WHO WERE YOU--?!
--CABLE-- DON'T GO-- DON'T LEAVE ME ALONE--
NOOOOO!
UHHGHA
UNNFF
HAVEN'T HAD A DECENT NIGHT'S SLEEP IN *WEEKS*. THESE DREAMS NEVER STOP...
NEED A SHOWER-- MAYBE THAT'LL CLEAR MY...


"... HEAD."
GOOD MORNING, SCOTT.
IS EVERYTHING ALL RIGHT?
I'M SORRY-- I --
-- HAD A NIGHTMARE --
-- WOKE UP --
-- UHM -- I SHOULD SHUT UP AND LEAVE NOW.
SOMEONE PLEASE SHOOT ME NOW.


UH--SPAY-SEE-BA--?
YOO ARE VELCOME.
YEAH, RIGHT, REGULAR UNITED NATIONS THERE, DRAKE.
HARD T'BELIEVE THAT PETEY'S LITTLE SISTER HERE WAS AKCHALLY A TEENAGER A YEAR BACK!
I MEAN, GLOM THE NEURAL FIREWORKS GOIN' ON IN MY HEAD HERE--
--IF THIS IS WHAT HAPPENED TO HER--
--WHAT-IN-THE-HECK-ARE-CHICKEN-McNUGGETS GONNA DO TO ME?!
JUBILEE, SHE'S A KID AGAIN--WHAT'S SO BAD ABOUT THAT?
NOTHIN' THAT A FEW HORMONES AN' THE DUDE FROM THAT MTV SPORTS SHOW COULDN'T CURE IN AN HOUR OR TWO, I GUESS...
‹WE ARE NOT READY FOR THIS, FYODR.›

‹SHE IS NOT READY FOR THIS.›
‹WHAT CHOICE DO WE HAVE AT THIS POINT, ALEXI ?›
‹OMEGA RED HAS BEEN MISSING FOR OVER FORTY-EIGHT HOURS!›
‹WHETHER WE LIKE IT OR NOT--AND BELIEVE ME, I LOOK AT HER FACE AND I SEE MY OWN DAUGHTER--WE HAVE NO CHOICE...›
‹RED FLAG #133 IS OUR LAST HOPE TO STOP THE NEFTELENSK INCURSION!›
‹NO, FYODR--WE MAY STILL HAVE ONE MORE OPTION.›
‹FLAGWATCH #133 HAS REPORTED SOMETHING OF GREAT INTEREST--›
‹--THE CHILD'S BROTHER HAS RETURNED--AND HE BROUGHT HIS FRIENDS WITH HIM.›
‹YOU DON'T MEAN--?›
‹MY FLIGHT TO THE URST-ORDYNSKI COLLECTIVE LEAVES IN ONE HOUR.›
‹WE ARE GOING TO FIND OUT WHAT HAPPENED IN NEFTELENSK--›
‹--WHAT HAPPENED TO DARKSTAR AND GARNOFF--AND TO OMEGA RED--›
‹--WE ARE JUST GOING TO USE THE X-MEN TO DO IT!!›
NEXT ISSUE:
OMEGA RED!
THE SOUL SKINNER! AND THE SECRET OF RED FLAG #133!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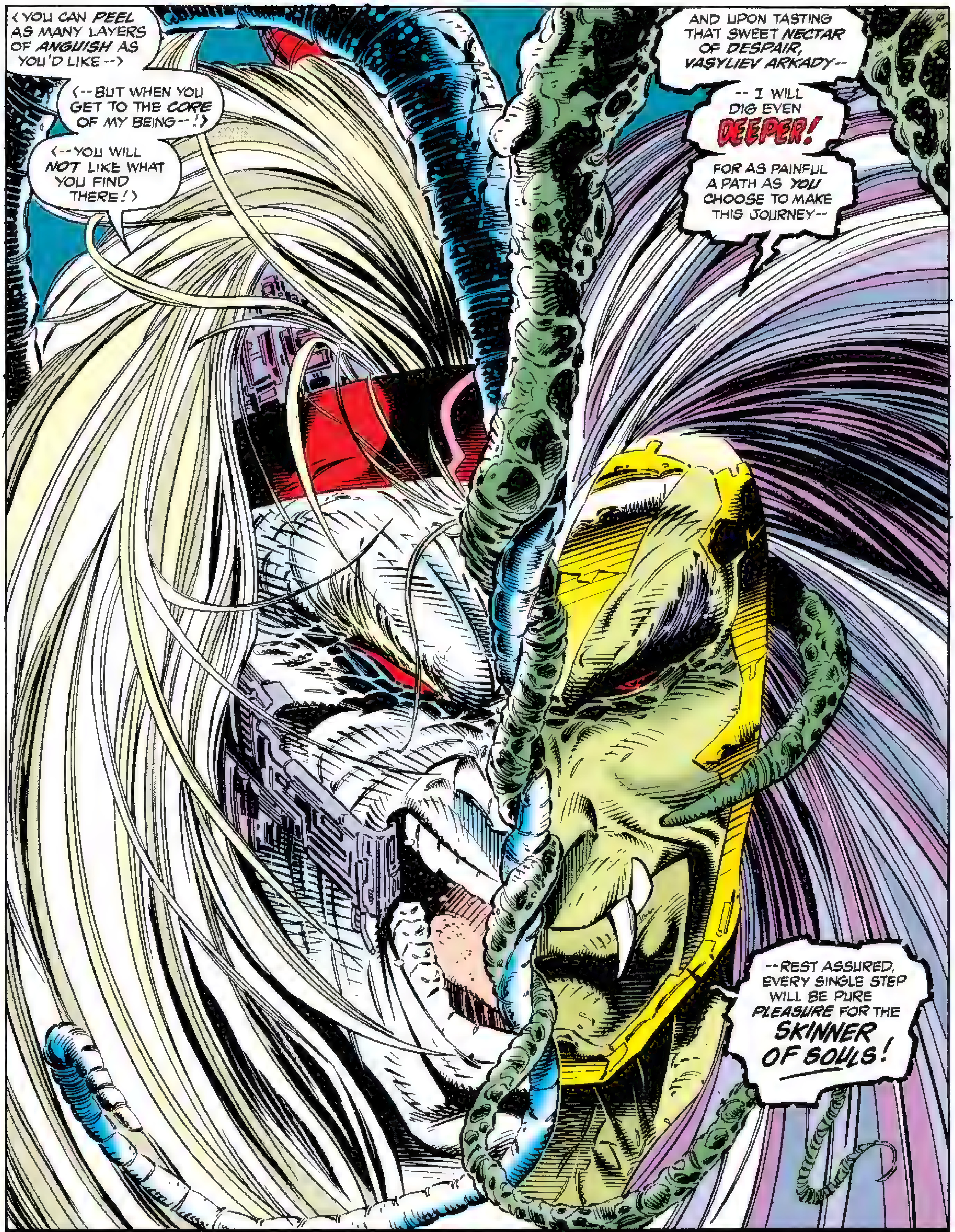
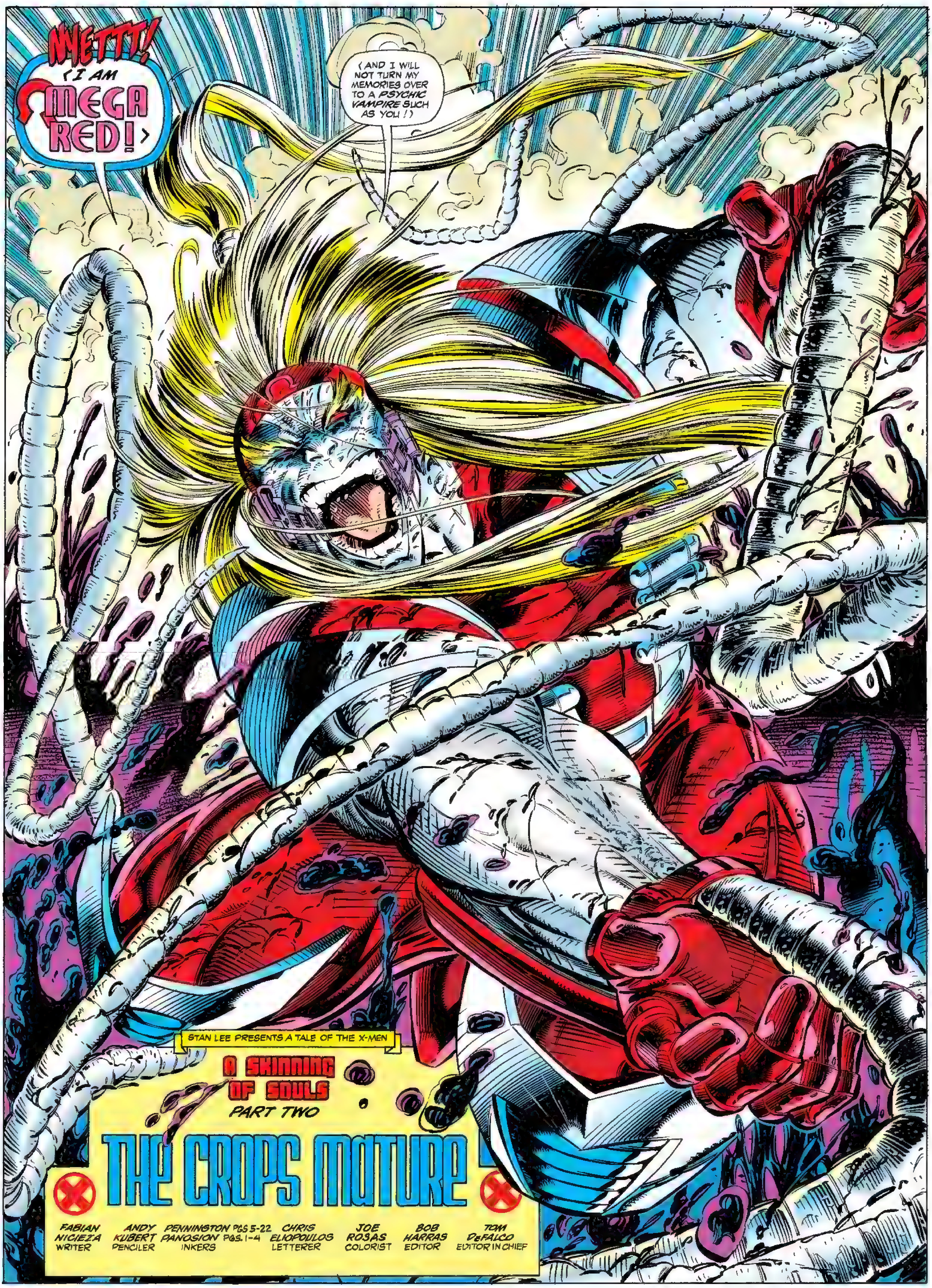

‹YOU CAN PEEL AS MANY LAYERS OF ANGUISH AS YOU'D LIKE--›
‹--BUT WHEN YOU GET TO THE CORE OF MY BEING--!›
‹--YOU WILL NOT LIKE WHAT YOU FIND THERE!›
AND UPON TASTING THAT SWEET NECTAR OF DESPAIR, VASYLIEV ARKADY--
-- I WILL DIG EVEN DEEPER!
FOR AS PAINFUL A PATH AS YOU CHOOSE TO MAKE THIS JOURNEY--
--REST ASSURED, EVERY SINGLE STEP WILL BE PURE PLEASURE FOR THE SKINNER OF SOULS!


NYETTT! ‹I AM OMEGA RED!›
‹AND I WILL NOT TURN MY MEMORIES OVER TO A PSYCHIC VAMPIRE SUCH AS YOU!›
STAN LEE PRESENTS A TALE OF THE X-MEN
A SKINNING OF SOULS PART TWO
THE CROPS MATURE
FABIAN NICIEZA WRITER
ANDY KUBERT PENCILER
PENNINGTON PGS 5-22 PANOSION PGS. 1-4 INKERS
CHRIS ELIOPOULOS LETTERER
JOE ROSAS COLORIST
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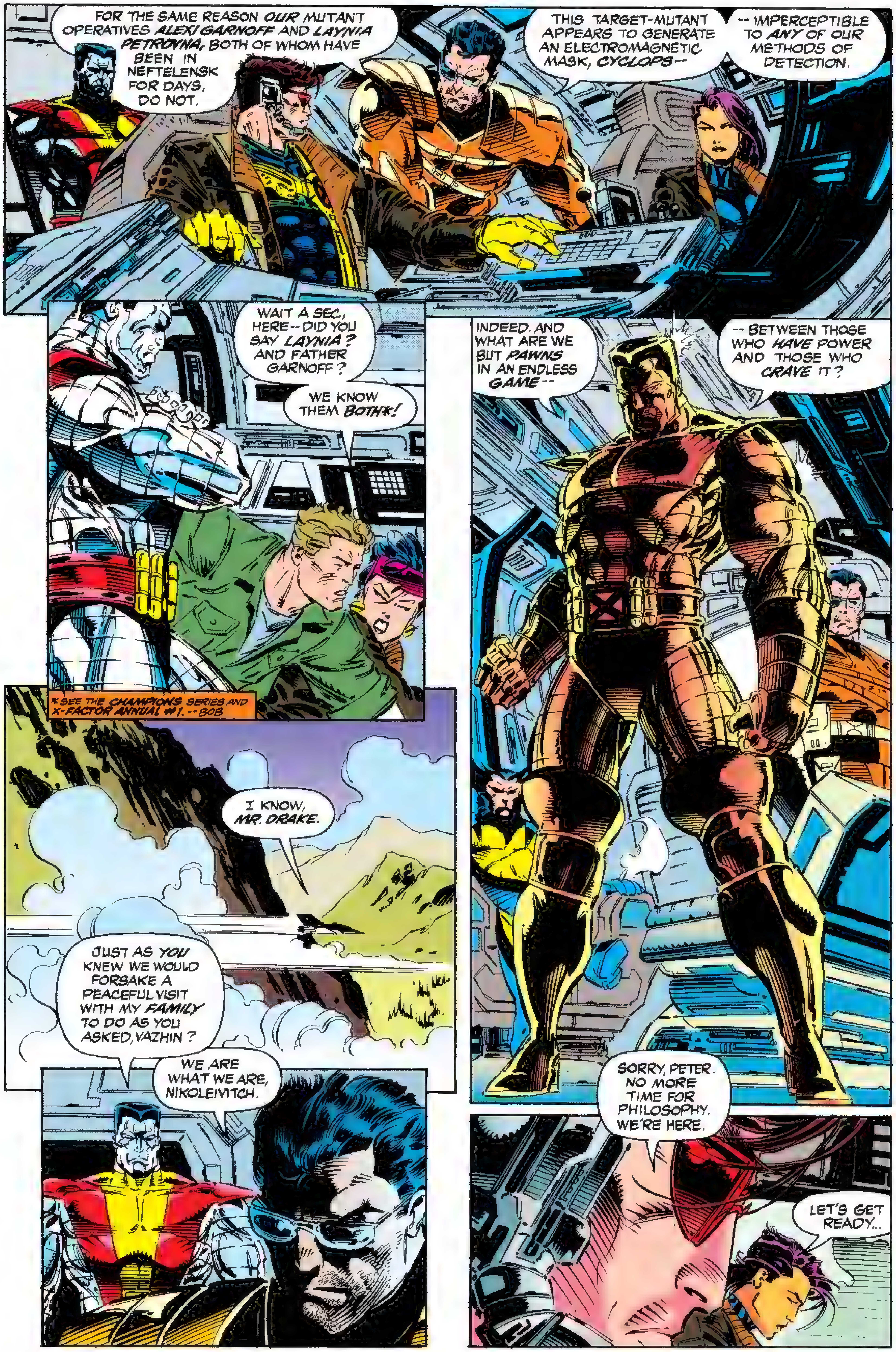
TOM DeFALCO EDITOR IN CHIEF

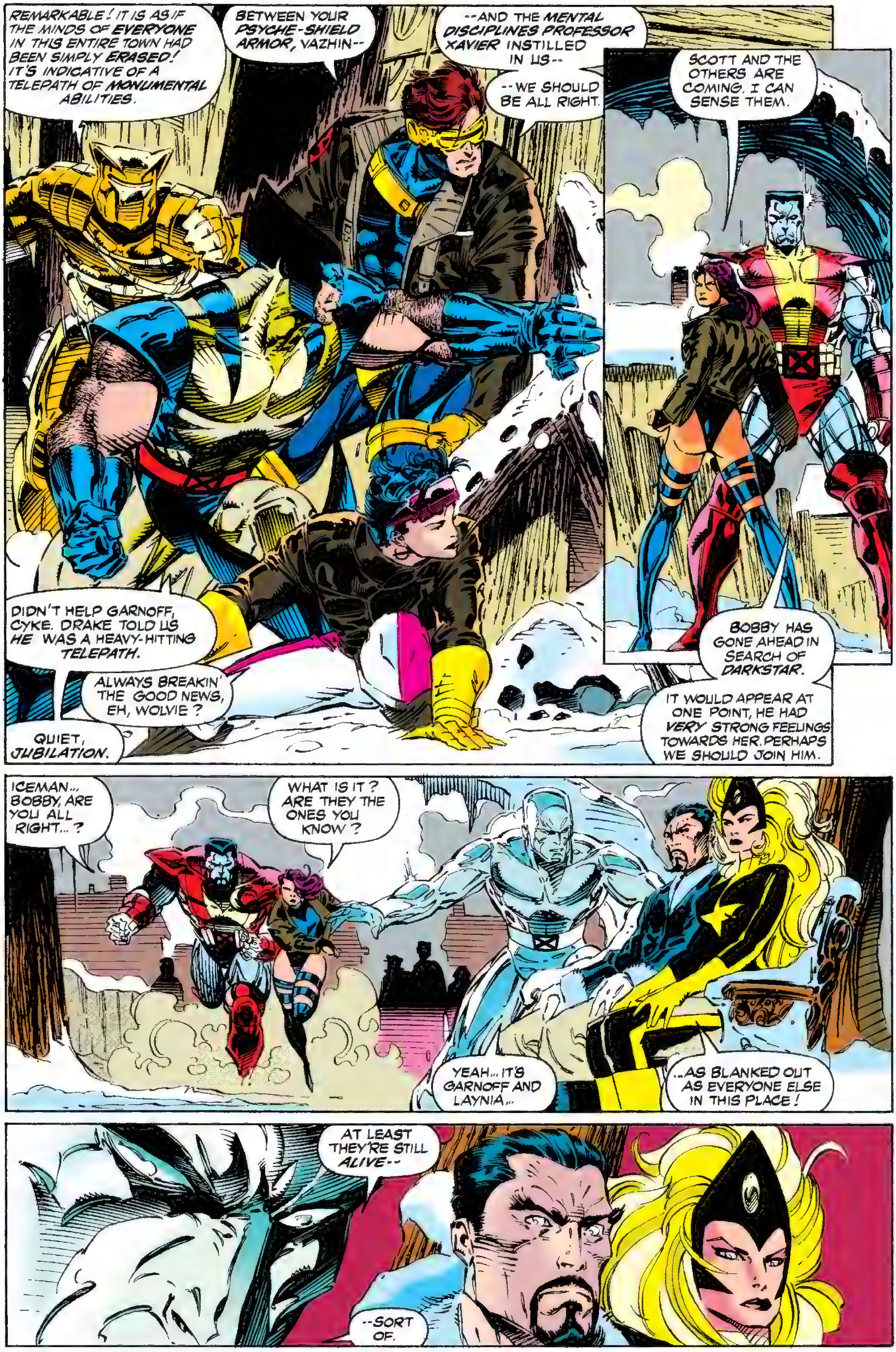
‹WHERE HAVE YOU GONE, MIND-RAPER?›
‹AFTER ALL THE PAIN YOU HAVE CAUSED HERE IN THE TOWN OF *NEFTELENSK*--›
‹--AM I TO BELIEVE YOU CAN BE SO *EASILY* DEFEATED?›
SPLUCHT
FRASHT
THLUP
THLUP
BY ALL MEANS, BATTLE EVER ONWARDS.
THE GREATER *YOUR* EFFORT, THE GREATER *MY* REWARD!
‹YOU SPEAK IN RIDDLES, DOG!›
‹PERHAPS A TASTE OF *CARBONADIUM COILS*--›
‹--WILL SHUT YOU UP!›
OR PERHAPS *NOT*, OMEGA RED!
BUT MY THANKS--
SHIF LAK
--FOR PROVIDING ME SUCH A *VISCERAL* PATHWAY--
--INTO THE GRAY FOLDS OF YOUR *SHATTERED MIND!*
MMMNNFFGH!

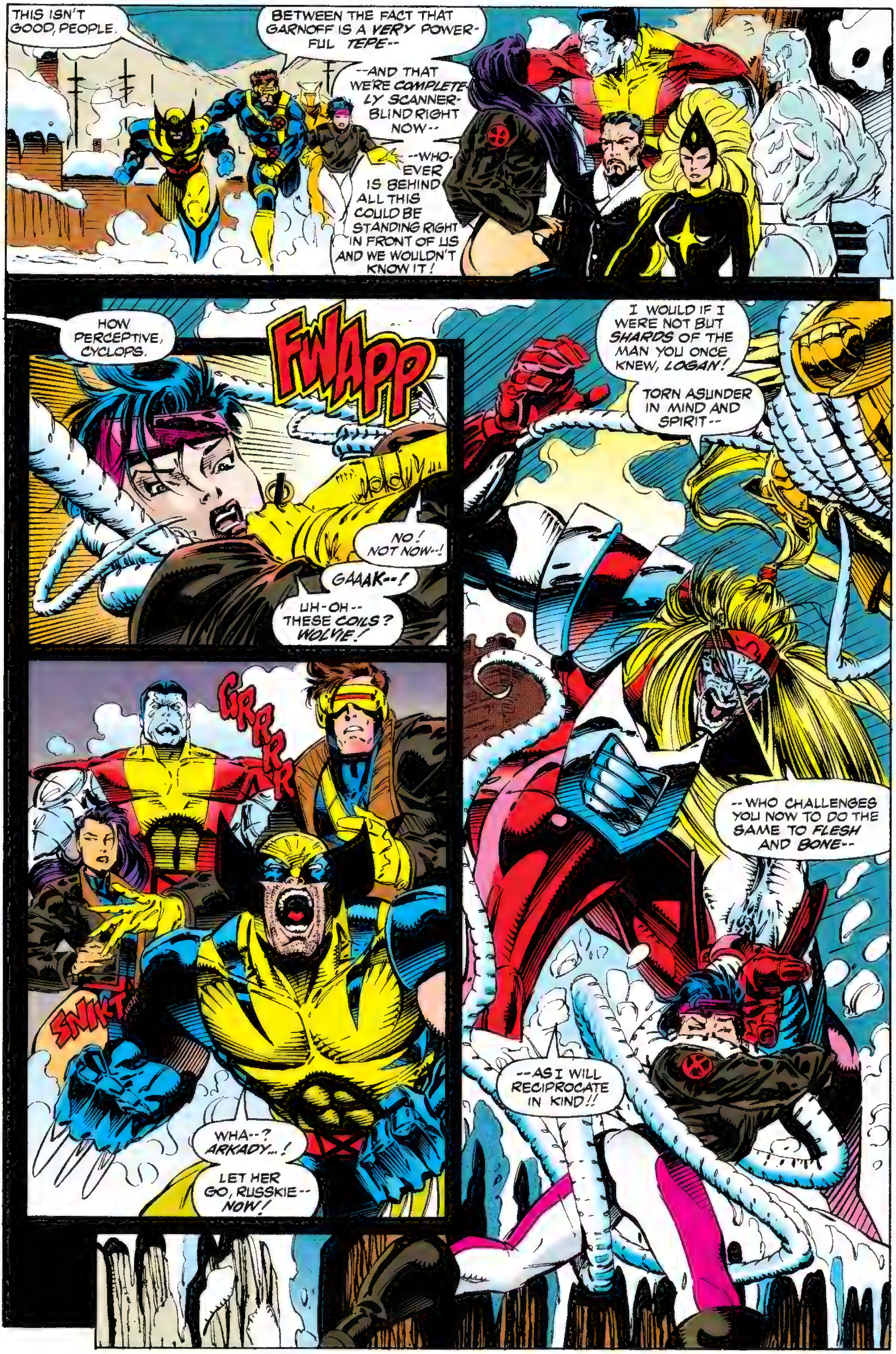
GRRAAK!
I LOOK INSIDE YOU AND SEE NOTHING BUT A *SHATTERED* MIRROR, ARKADY!
THE JAGGED TASTE OF BROKEN GLASS IS LIKE SWEET CANDY ON MY TONGUE--
-- BUT IT DOES NOT MAKE FOR A FILLING MEAL!!
YOU ARE *UN-DONE,* OMEGA RED!
SUCH PHYSICALITY, BORDERING AS UNTO A *PRIMAL FORCE* OF NATURE, YOU MIGHT BE IN *BODY*--
--BUT IN *MIND,* YOU ARE AS UNTO A GENTLE SUMMER RAIN.
AND AS SUCH, I LET YOU WASH OVER ME--
--YOUR TATTERED MEMORIES--
<--YOUR ARROGANT PRESUMPTIONS OF COMING HERE AND CONTROLLING ME-->
<-- AND THOUGH MUTANT BORN AND WARRIOR BRED-->
<--I LEAVE YOU LIKE THE REST OF THIS IMPOVERISHED VILLAGE-->
<--AN *EMPTY SHELL,* A CARAPACE OF SKIN HOLDING NOTHING BUT MEMORIES OF *PAIN* AND *ANGUISH.*>
<SO *MUCH* PAIN AND ANGUISH INSIDE US ALL, NO?>
<HOW DO WE SURVIVE IT ALL?>
<SIMPLE... WE *DON'T.*>

AS THE SOUL SKINNER LAMENTS ON A LIFE GONE TERRIBLY WRONG--
--A NEW CROP COMES TO HARVEST-- A FEAST FOR THE TABLE--
--FOR ABOARD THE INCOMING BLACKBIRD JET ARE THE X-MEN--
--A FAMILY OF MUTANTS WHO STRIVE TO CO-EXIST WITH HUMANITY IN PEACE AND PROSPERITY--
--A DREAM--A MISSION WITH A HEAVY PRICE TO PAY...
ARE YOU CERTAIN THERE IS MUTANT ACTIVITY IN NEFTELENSK, COLONEL VAZHIN?
POSITIVE, PIOTR NIKOLEIVITCH.
THE TARGET WAS THE SUBJECT OF AN ON-GOING FLAGWATCH.
FLAGWATCH? WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?
TRADE TALK, CYKE.
LONG-TERM CIVILIAN PLANT--A MOLE--SENT TO WATCH FOR ANY POTENTIAL THREATS TO THE STABILITY OF THE GOVERNMENT.
COLONEL, YOU SAID THIS MUTANT HAS BEEN UNDER REVIEW FOR OVER FOURTEEN YEARS?
THAT IS CORRECT, MS. BRADDOCK.
BUT WE LOST CONTACT A MONTH AGO. WE DON'T KNOW HOW OR WHY.
THERE'S ANOTHER MYSTERY, VAZHIN IF THIS INDIVIDUAL IS MUTANT--
--WHY ISN'T HE REGISTERING ON OUR CEREBRO SCANNERS?


FOR THE SAME REASON *OUR* MUTANT OPERATIVES *ALEXI GARNOFF* AND *LAYNIA PETROVNA,* BOTH OF WHOM HAVE BEEN IN NEFTELENSK FOR DAYS, DO NOT.
THIS TARGET-MUTANT APPEARS TO GENERATE AN ELECTROMAGNETIC MASK, *CYCLOPS*--
--IMPERCEPTIBLE TO *ANY* OF OUR METHODS OF DETECTION.
WAIT A SEC, HERE--DID YOU SAY *LAYNIA?* AND FATHER GARNOFF?
WE KNOW THEM *BOTH**!
*SEE THE *CHAMPIONS* SERIES AND *X-FACTOR ANNUAL #1.* --BOB
I KNOW, *MR. DRAKE.*
JUST AS *YOU* KNEW WE WOULD FORSAKE A PEACEFUL VISIT WITH MY *FAMILY* TO DO AS YOU ASKED, VAZHIN?
WE ARE WHAT WE ARE, NIKOLEIVITCH.
INDEED. AND WHAT ARE WE BUT *PAWNS* IN AN ENDLESS *GAME*--
--BETWEEN THOSE WHO *HAVE* POWER AND THOSE WHO *CRAVE* IT?
SORRY, PETER. NO MORE TIME FOR PHILOSOPHY. WE'RE HERE.
LET'S GET READY...

"... COLOSSUS, PSYLOCKE, ICEMAN-- OUT NOW. CLEAR A SAFE LANDING ZONE FOR US."
I WOULD IMAGINE THAT A SAFE ENTRY-WAY INTO THE TOWN SHOULD PROVE TO BE THE LEAST OF OUR PROBLEMS.
NO ONE IS EVEN MOVING!
THIS IS REALLY WEIRD.
BETTS, YOU BETTER CONTACT CYKE TELEPATHICALLY!
SCOTT, THE CITIZENS OF THE TOWN APPEAR TO BE IN SOME SORT OF VEGATATIVE STATE.
CAN YOU SCAN THEIR MINDS, BETSY?
THERE'S NOTHING THERE. THEY READ AS BLANK SLATES, SCOTT.
OKAY-- SCOUT AHEAD, WE'RE COMING OUT! BE CAREFUL.

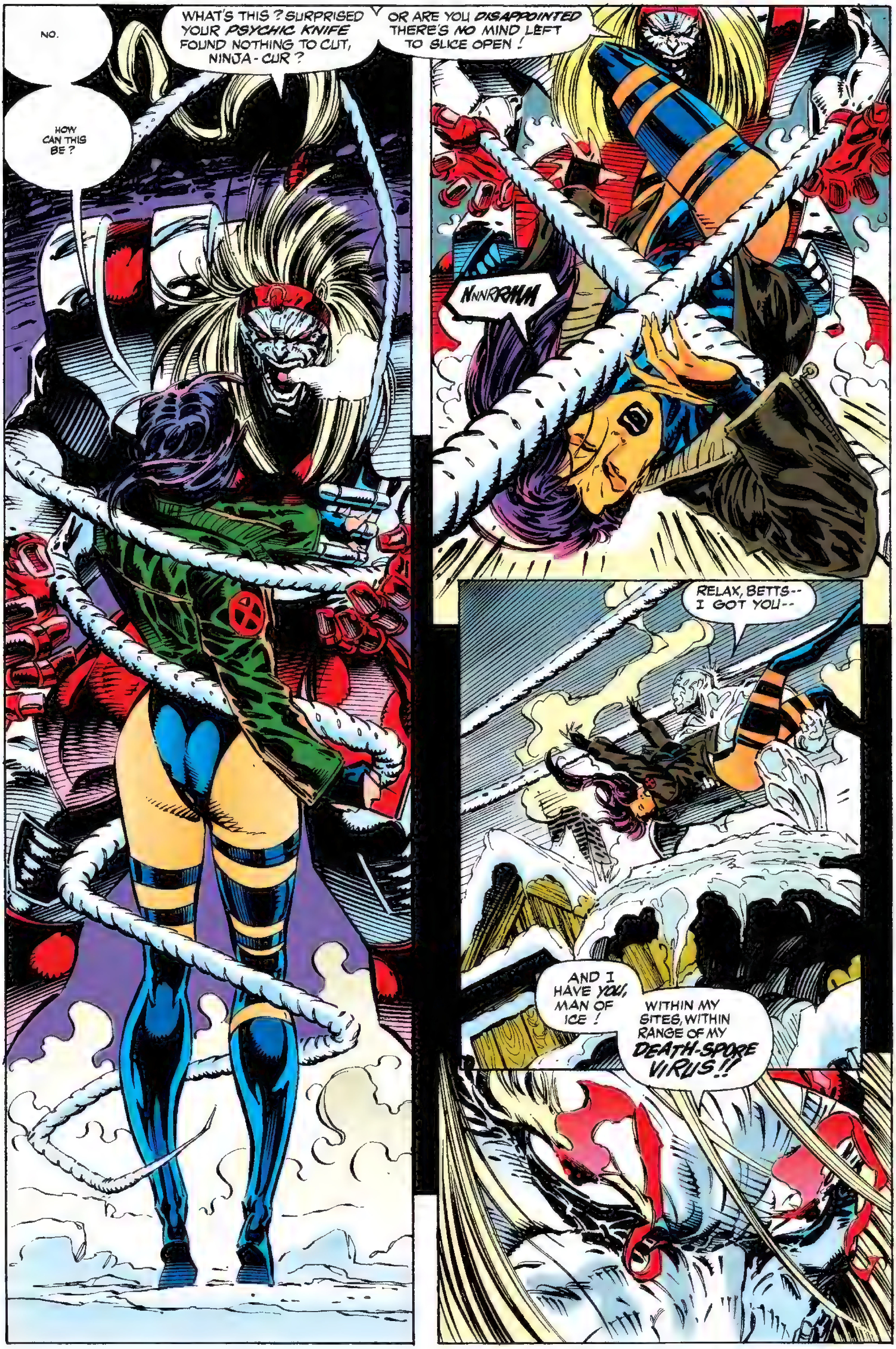

REMARKABLE! IT IS AS IF THE MINDS OF *EVERYONE* IN THIS ENTIRE TOWN HAD BEEN SIMPLY *ERASED!* IT'S INDICATIVE OF A TELEPATH OF *MONUMENTAL* ABILITIES.
BETWEEN YOUR *PSYCHE-SHIELD ARMOR*, VAZHIN--
--AND THE *MENTAL DISCIPLINES PROFESSOR XAVIER* INSTILLED IN US--
--WE SHOULD BE ALL RIGHT.
DIDN'T HELP GARNOFF, CYKE. DRAKE TOLD US *HE* WAS A HEAVY-HITTING *TELEPATH.*
ALWAYS BREAKIN' THE GOOD NEWS, EH, WOLVIE?
QUIET, *JUBILATION.*
SCOTT AND THE OTHERS ARE COMING. I CAN SENSE THEM.
BOBBY HAS GONE AHEAD IN SEARCH OF *DARKSTAR.*
IT WOULD APPEAR AT ONE POINT, HE HAD *VERY* STRONG FEELINGS TOWARDS HER. PERHAPS WE SHOULD JOIN HIM.
ICEMAN... BOBBY, ARE YOU ALL RIGHT...?
WHAT IS IT? ARE THEY THE ONES YOU KNOW?
YEAH... IT'S GARNOFF AND LAYNIA...
...AS BLANKED OUT AS EVERYONE ELSE IN THIS PLACE!
AT LEAST THEY'RE STILL *ALIVE*--
--SORT OF.

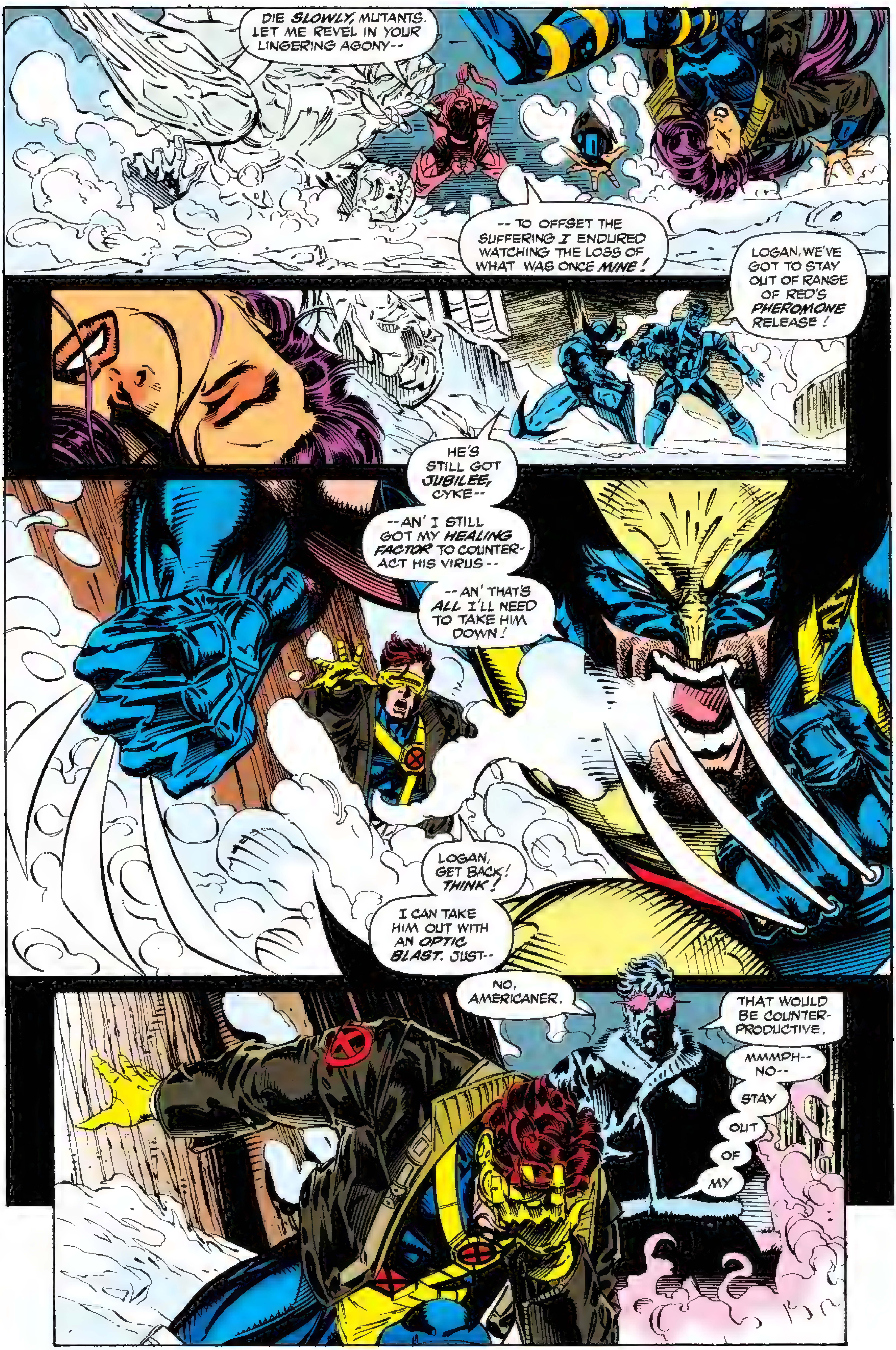

THIS ISN'T GOOD, PEOPLE.
BETWEEN THE FACT THAT GARNOFF IS A *VERY* POWERFUL *TEPE*--
--AND THAT WE'RE *COMPLETELY SCANNER-BLIND* RIGHT NOW--
--WHOEVER IS BEHIND ALL THIS COULD BE STANDING RIGHT IN FRONT OF US AND WE WOULDN'T KNOW IT!
HOW PERCEPTIVE, CYCLOPS.
FWAPP
NO! NOT NOW--!
GAAAK--!
UH-OH-- THESE *COILS*? *WOLVIE!*
I WOULD IF I WERE NOT BUT *SHARDS* OF THE MAN YOU ONCE KNEW, *LOGAN!*
TORN ASUNDER IN MIND AND SPIRIT--
GRRRR
SNIKT
WHA--? *ARKADY*..!
LET HER GO, RUSSKIE-- *NOW!*
--WHO CHALLENGES YOU NOW TO DO THE SAME TO *FLESH* AND *BONE*--
--AS I WILL RECIPROCATE IN KIND!!

RED SQUARE. MOSCOW, WHERE DESPERATE GAMES OF CHANCE ARE PLAYED--
--THE PRIZE? THE SOUL OF A FAR-OFF VILLAGE IN DISTANT SIBERIA-- NEFTELENSK.
‹THAT IS THE SITUATION AS IT NOW STANDS--›*
‹--WHICH, AS WE ALL AGREE, IS UNACCEPTABLE.›
‹ARE YOU CERTAIN, GENERAL SHELTOV, THAT THIS IS THE LAST REMAINING COURSE OF ACTION LEFT TO US?›
‹I WOULD NOT PROPOSE IT, WERE IT NOT, GEVHERSKY.›
‹IN THEORY, THE PROCESS SHOULD WORK.›
‹BUT WE HAVE NEVER TRIED IT ON A HUMAN SUBJECT.›
‹AS UNCOMFORTABLE AS THE THOUGHT IS, WE HAVE LITTLE CHOICE, DON'T WE?›
‹YOU REALIZE THAT IN APPLICATION, RED FLAG #133 MIGHT BE KILLED.›
‹I AM NOT INHUMAN, BUT IF SACRIFICING THE RED FLAG IS OUR ONLY HOPE OF STOPPING THE NEFTELENSK INCIDENT FROM EXPANDING--›
‹--AND, GENTLEMEN, LEFT UNCHECKED, IT WILL EXPAND--›
‹--THEN SO BE IT.›
‹EVEN IF IT COSTS ME THE SERVICES OF OMEGA RED, FYDOR?›
‹ESPECIALLY IF IT COSTS YOU THAT, MY DEAR MATSU'O...›
*TRANSLATED FROM THE RUSSIAN.--B.H.

THE GARDEN ENTRANCEWAY TO THE NYOIRIN ANCESTRAL HOME IN THE SUBURBAN PREFECTURE OF KANAGAWA, OUTSIDE OF TOKYO...
‹A VERY UNNECESSARY DISPLAY, KWANNON.›
‹SO MANY LIVES WASTED, AND ALL FOR THE SAKE OF PROVING YOUR POINT.›
‹HOW ELSE WAS I TO SHOW YOU I AM PREPARED TO REGAIN MY RIGHTFUL PLACE AS YOUR ELITE ASSASSIN, MY LORD--›
‹--THEN BY ELIMINATING YOUR HONOR GUARD?›
‹VERY WELL, KWANNON. FIGHT AGAINST THE SPIRIT OF YOUR NAMESAKE, AS YOU ALWAYS HAVE--›
‹--SHOW NO MERCY TO ANY AND ALL.›
‹BUT YOU KNOW THE ONE ACT YOU MUST PERFORM IN ORDER TO TRULY REGAIN YOUR FORMER PLACE, DO YOU NOT?›
‹INDEED, LORD NYOIRIN -- I MUST ELIMINATE MY OTHER SELF.›
‹THE X-MAN CALLED PSYLOCKE MUST DIE!›*
*TRANSLATED FROM THE JAPANESE.--BOB

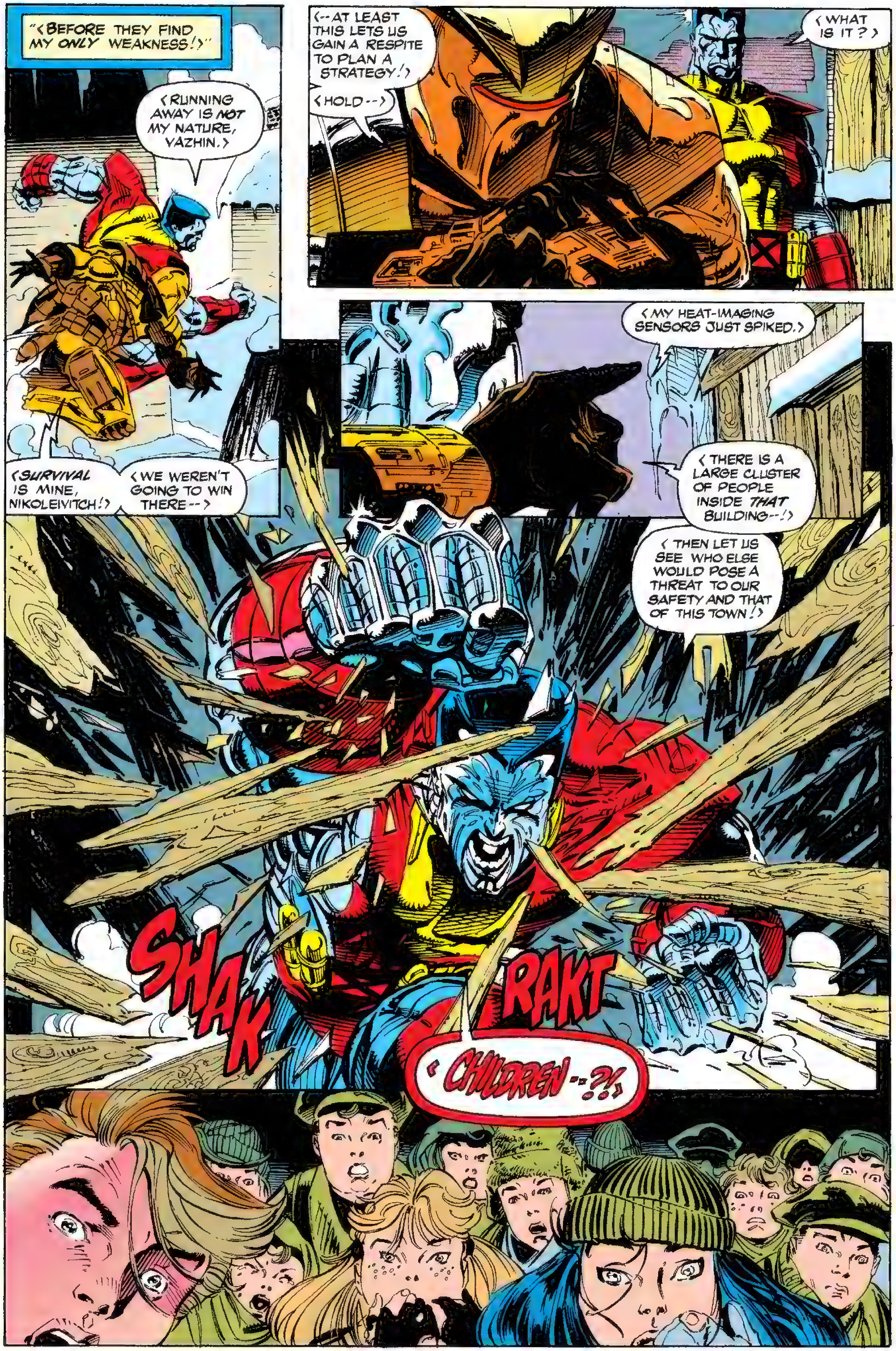
NEFTELENSK. COLD WINDS FROM ALL DIRECTIONS BUFFET THIS SMALL SIBERIAN TOWN --
-- A COLD WIND THAT CUTS TO THE BONE, TO THE VERY SOUL --
-- AS TWO MEN, LINKED BY FATE, AND MORE--BY HATRED--FIND THEMSELVES ONCE MORE IN BATTLE.
YOU'RE GOIN' DOWN, ARKADY!
FOR JANICE-- FOR EVERYTHING YOU'VE DONE T'ME AND MINE --
-- YOU'RE GONNA DIE!
WOLVERINE, STOP!
THAT'S NOT ARKADY! HE'S BEING CONTROLLED BY WHATEVER FORCE HAS CO-OPTED THIS TOWN!
AGREED, SCOTT.
WHICH ONLY MEANS WE HAVE TO TAKE HIM OUT AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE.
FSASHK

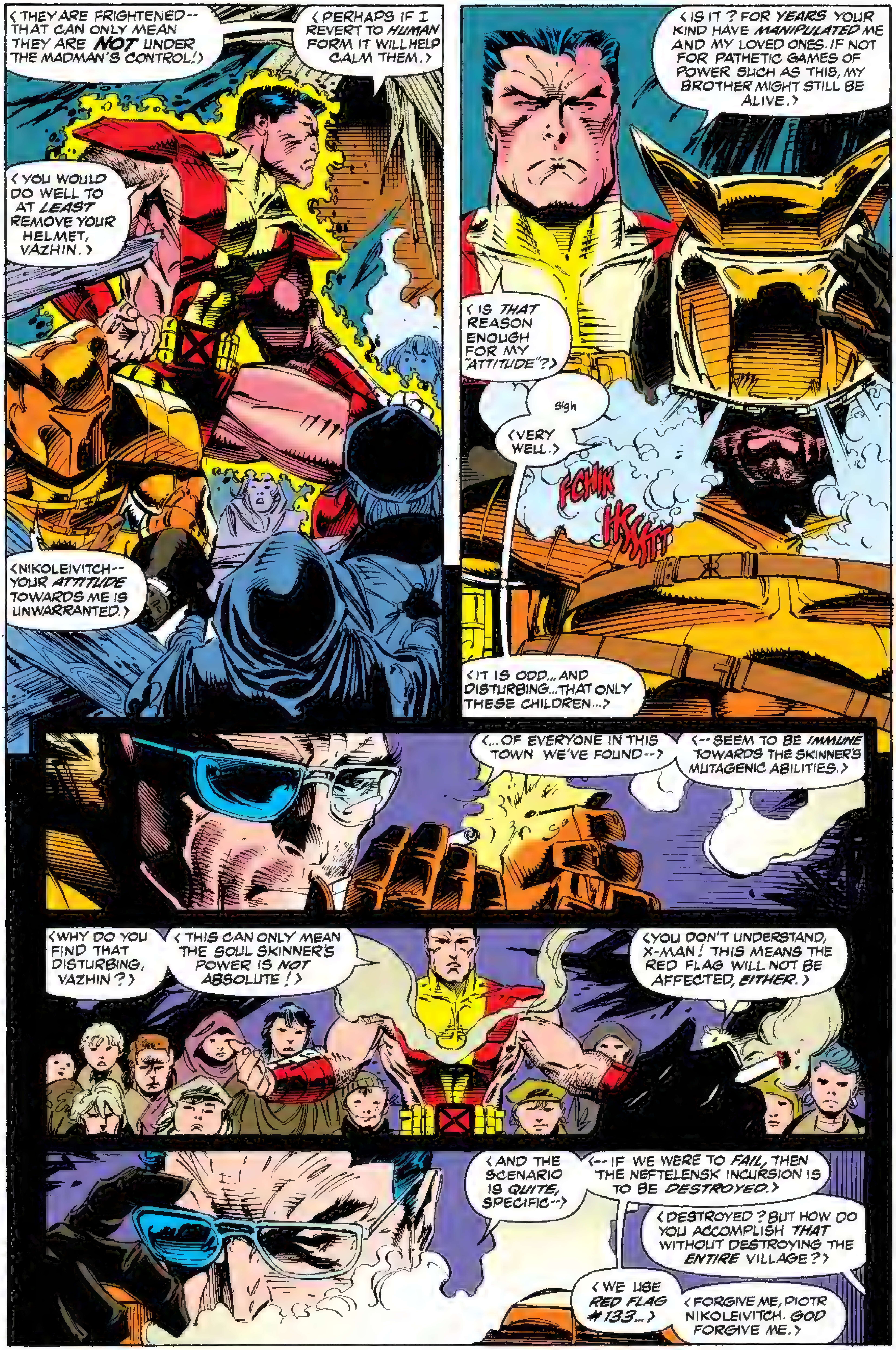

NO.
HOW CAN THIS BE?
WHAT'S THIS? SURPRISED YOUR PSYCHIC KNIFE FOUND NOTHING TO CUT, NINJA-CUR?
OR ARE YOU DISAPPOINTED THERE'S NO MIND LEFT TO SLICE OPEN!
NNNRRMM
RELAX, BETTS-- I GOT YOU--
AND I HAVE YOU, MAN OF ICE!
WITHIN MY SITES, WITHIN RANGE OF MY DEATH-SPORE VIRUS!!


DIE SLOWLY, MUTANTS. LET ME REVEL IN YOUR LINGERING AGONY--
--TO OFFSET THE SUFFERING I ENDURED WATCHING THE LOSS OF WHAT WAS ONCE MINE!
LOGAN, WE'VE GOT TO STAY OUT OF RANGE OF RED'S PHEROMONE RELEASE!
HE'S STILL GOT JUBILEE, CYKE--
--AN' I STILL GOT MY HEALING FACTOR TO COUNTERACT HIS VIRUS--
--AN' THAT'S ALL I'LL NEED TO TAKE HIM DOWN!
LOGAN, GET BACK! THINK!
I CAN TAKE HIM OUT WITH AN OPTIC BLAST. JUST--
NO, AMERICANER.
THAT WOULD BE COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE.
MMMPH-- NO-- STAY OUT OF MY

--MIND!!
OH, AND I CAN SEE WHY YOU WOULD WANT ME OUT, SCOTT SUMMERS!
YOU ARE A VERITABLE TREASURE CHEST OF ANGUISH!
SHOW ME YOUR PAIN, SCOTT--LET ME SEE IF IT MATCHES MINE!
HANG ON, ALEX-- HANG ON--
YOU ARE A MUTANT, SCOTT--
--GIFTED WITH INCREDIBLE POWERS--
--AND I WILL SHOW YOU HOW TO USE THESE ABILITIES FOR THE BENEFIT OF MANKIND!
BUT WHAT ABOUT ME? WHEN DO I DO SOMETHING FOR THE BENEFIT OF MYSELF?
NATHAN CHRISTOPHER-- MY CHILD-- THERE WAS SO MUCH I WANTED TO SAY--
--BEFORE I LOST YOU--
DADDY! DAAADDY-- WHY DID YOU LEAVE ME?
BECAUSE YOUR DADDY LEFT YOU?
TO SUCCEED AS A MUTANT--DOES A SUMMERS HAVE TO FAIL AS A HUMAN?
NO!
A CHILD? A BABY-- YOU LOST-- LIKE ME--
NOOOOOOOOOOOO

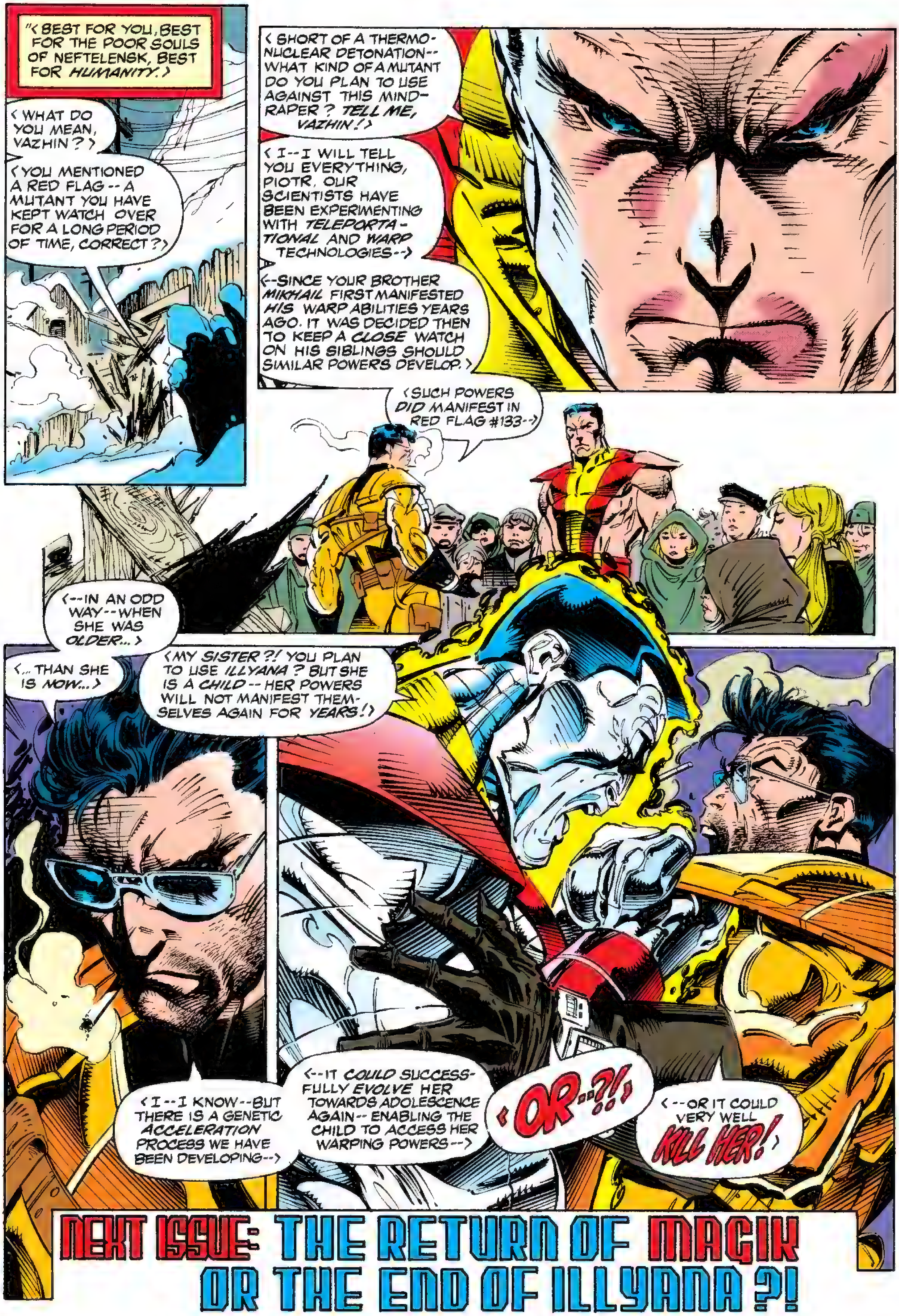
NOOOOOO
FWRUMPH
‹HMMPH. THE OTHERS?›
‹HERE.›
‹THIS ONE--›
‹--HURT ME!›
‹I DIDN'T THINK IT POSSIBLE. HIS MIND--SO GUARDED--SO TORTURED--›
‹--HOW DOES HE LIVE--WITH THE GUILT--?›
‹WE ALL LIVE WITH GUILT.›
‹WHAT ABOUT THE ONE FROM STATE SECURITY AND THE METALLIC ONE?›
‹MY SPORES COULD NOT AFFECT EITHER. THEY RETREATED WHEN THEY SAW THE BATTLE WAS FUTILE.›
‹NO. AFTER "SKINNING" SUMMERS, I NOW KNOW HIS KIND--›
‹--THEY WILL NOT ABANDON HOPE SO EASILY--›
‹- CERTAINLY NOT AS EASILY AS I.›
‹WE MUST FIND THEM...›
‹...BEFORE THEY DISCOVER A WAY TO DESTROY THE REFUGE I HAVE SOUGHT TO CRAFT HERE!›


"‹BEFORE THEY FIND MY *ONLY* WEAKNESS!›"
‹RUNNING AWAY IS *NOT* MY NATURE, VAZHIN.›
‹*SURVIVAL* IS MINE, NIKOLEIVITCH!›
‹WE WEREN'T GOING TO WIN THERE--›
‹--AT LEAST THIS LETS US GAIN A RESPITE TO PLAN A STRATEGY!›
‹HOLD--›
‹WHAT IS IT?›
‹MY HEAT-IMAGING SENSORS JUST SPIKED.›
‹THERE IS A LARGE CLUSTER OF PEOPLE INSIDE *THAT* BUILDING--!›
‹THEN LET US SEE WHO ELSE WOULD POSE A THREAT TO OUR SAFETY AND THAT OF THIS TOWN!›
SHAK
RAKT
‹CHILDREN--?!›


<THEY ARE FRIGHTENED-- THAT CAN ONLY MEAN THEY ARE *NOT* UNDER THE MADMAN'S CONTROL!>
<PERHAPS IF I REVERT TO *HUMAN* FORM IT WILL HELP CALM THEM.>
<YOU WOULD DO WELL TO AT *LEAST* REMOVE YOUR HELMET, VAZHIN.>
<NIKOLEIVITCH-- YOUR *ATTITUDE* TOWARDS ME IS UNWARRANTED.>
<IS IT? FOR *YEARS* YOUR KIND HAVE *MANIPULATED* ME AND MY LOVED ONES. IF NOT FOR PATHETIC GAMES OF POWER SUCH AS THIS, MY BROTHER MIGHT STILL BE ALIVE.>
<IS *THAT* REASON ENOUGH FOR MY "ATTITUDE"?>
sigh
<VERY WELL.>
FCHIK
HKSSTT
<IT IS ODD... AND DISTURBING... THAT ONLY THESE CHILDREN...>
<...OF EVERYONE IN THIS TOWN WE'VE FOUND-->
<--SEEM TO BE *IMMUNE* TOWARDS THE SKINNER'S MUTAGENIC ABILITIES.>
<WHY DO YOU FIND THAT DISTURBING, VAZHIN?>
<THIS CAN ONLY MEAN THE SOUL SKINNER'S POWER IS *NOT* ABSOLUTE!>
<YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND, X-MAN! THIS MEANS THE RED FLAG WILL NOT BE AFFECTED, *EITHER*.>
<AND THE SCENARIO IS *QUITE*, SPECIFIC-->
<--IF WE WERE TO *FAIL*, THEN THE NEFTELENSK INCURSION IS TO BE *DESTROYED*.>
<DESTROYED? BUT HOW DO YOU ACCOMPLISH *THAT* WITHOUT DESTROYING THE *ENTIRE* VILLAGE?>
<WE USE *RED FLAG #133*...>
<FORGIVE ME, PIOTR NIKOLEIVITCH. *GOD* FORGIVE ME.>

THE HUSH OF NIGHT OVER THE UST-ORDYNSKI FARM COLLECTIVE IS DISRUPTED BY SOMETHING EVEN QUIETER THAN THE NIGHT...
FWUSHSHSH
...THE STILLNESS OF IMPENDING DOOM!
SHIK
WMMMM
FCHASH
<EH--? WHO IS-->
FACHOW
FACHOW
FACHOW

<NIKOLAI? DID YOU DROP SOME-->
<OH NO-->
<PLEASE-- NO-->
<ILLYANA--!>
FA CHOW
FA CHOW
FA CHOW
SHSSSSTTSSS
<ILLYANA, CHILD-->
SHSSSSTTSSS
<-- IT IS BEST YOU COME WITH US.>


"< BEST FOR YOU, BEST FOR THE POOR SOULS OF NEFTELENSK, BEST FOR *HUMANITY*. >
< WHAT DO YOU MEAN, VAZHIN? >
< YOU MENTIONED A RED FLAG -- A MUTANT YOU HAVE KEPT WATCH OVER FOR A LONG PERIOD OF TIME, CORRECT? >
< SHORT OF A THERMONUCLEAR DETONATION -- WHAT KIND OF A MUTANT DO YOU PLAN TO USE AGAINST THIS MIND-RAPER? *TELL ME, VAZHIN!* >
< I -- I WILL TELL YOU EVERYTHING, PIOTR. OUR SCIENTISTS HAVE BEEN EXPERIMENTING WITH *TELEPORTATIONAL* AND *WARP* TECHNOLOGIES -- >
< -- SINCE YOUR BROTHER *MIKHAIL* FIRST MANIFESTED *HIS* WARP ABILITIES YEARS AGO. IT WAS DECIDED THEN TO KEEP A *CLOSE* WATCH ON HIS SIBLINGS SHOULD SIMILAR POWERS DEVELOP. >
< SUCH POWERS *DID* MANIFEST IN RED FLAG #133 -- >
< -- IN AN ODD WAY -- WHEN SHE WAS *OLDER*... >
< ... THAN SHE IS *NOW*... >
< MY *SISTER*?! YOU PLAN TO USE *ILLYANA*? BUT SHE IS A *CHILD* -- HER POWERS WILL NOT MANIFEST THEMSELVES AGAIN FOR *YEARS*! >
< I -- I KNOW -- BUT THERE IS A GENETIC *ACCELERATION* PROCESS WE HAVE BEEN DEVELOPING -- >
< -- IT *COULD* SUCCESSFULLY *EVOLVE* HER TOWARDS ADOLESCENCE AGAIN -- ENABLING THE CHILD TO ACCESS HER WARPING POWERS -- >
< OR --?! >
< -- OR IT COULD VERY WELL *KILL HER!* >
NEXT ISSUE: THE RETURN OF MAGIK OR THE END OF ILLYANA ?!

IN THIRTY DAYS -- "A HARVEST OF THE INNOCENT"!!

bcpeterson92
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X-MEN POSTER MAGAZINE #2 POSTER BY BRANDON PETERSON & AL MILGROM

MARVEL COMICS
X-MEN
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19
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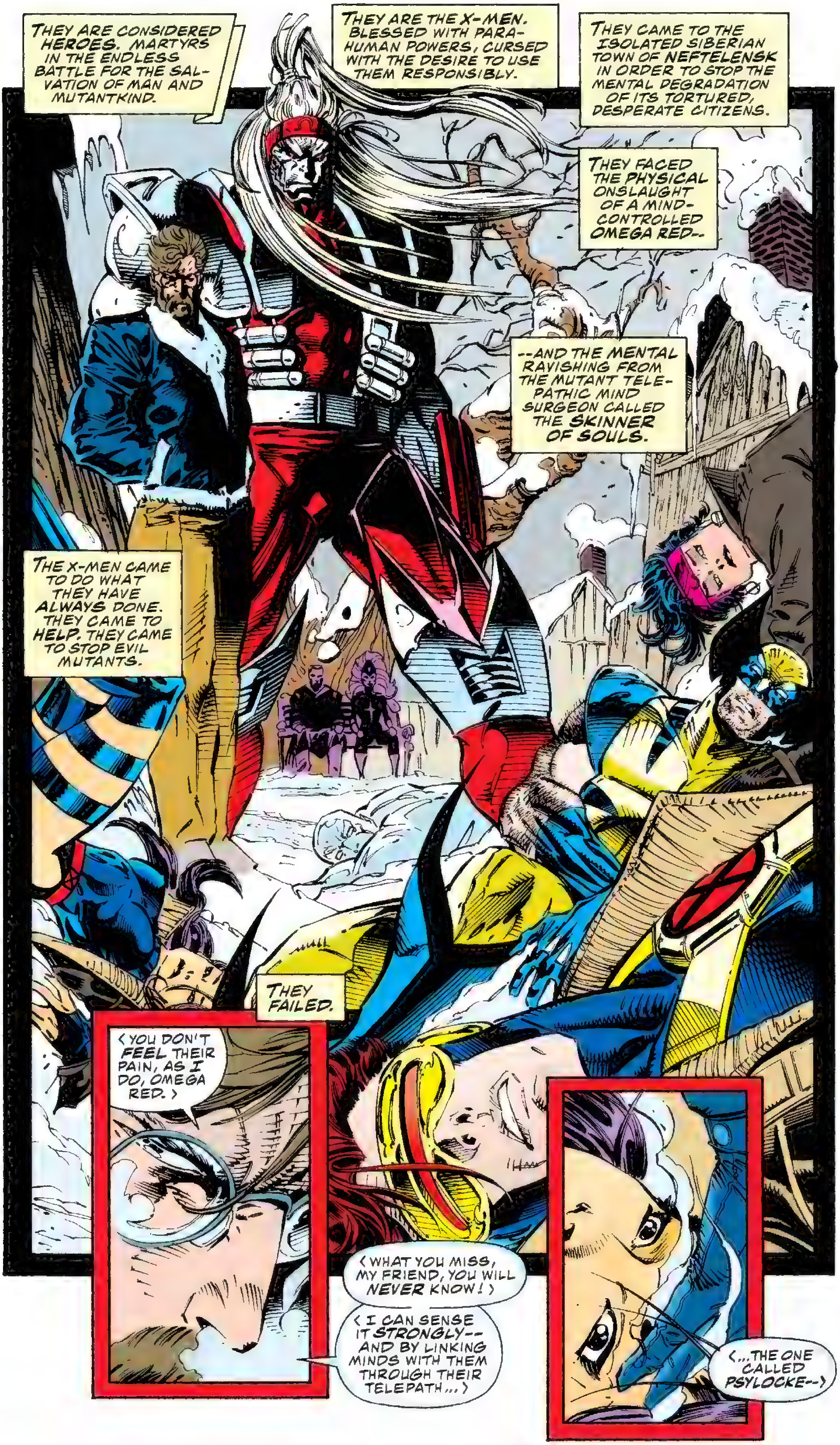
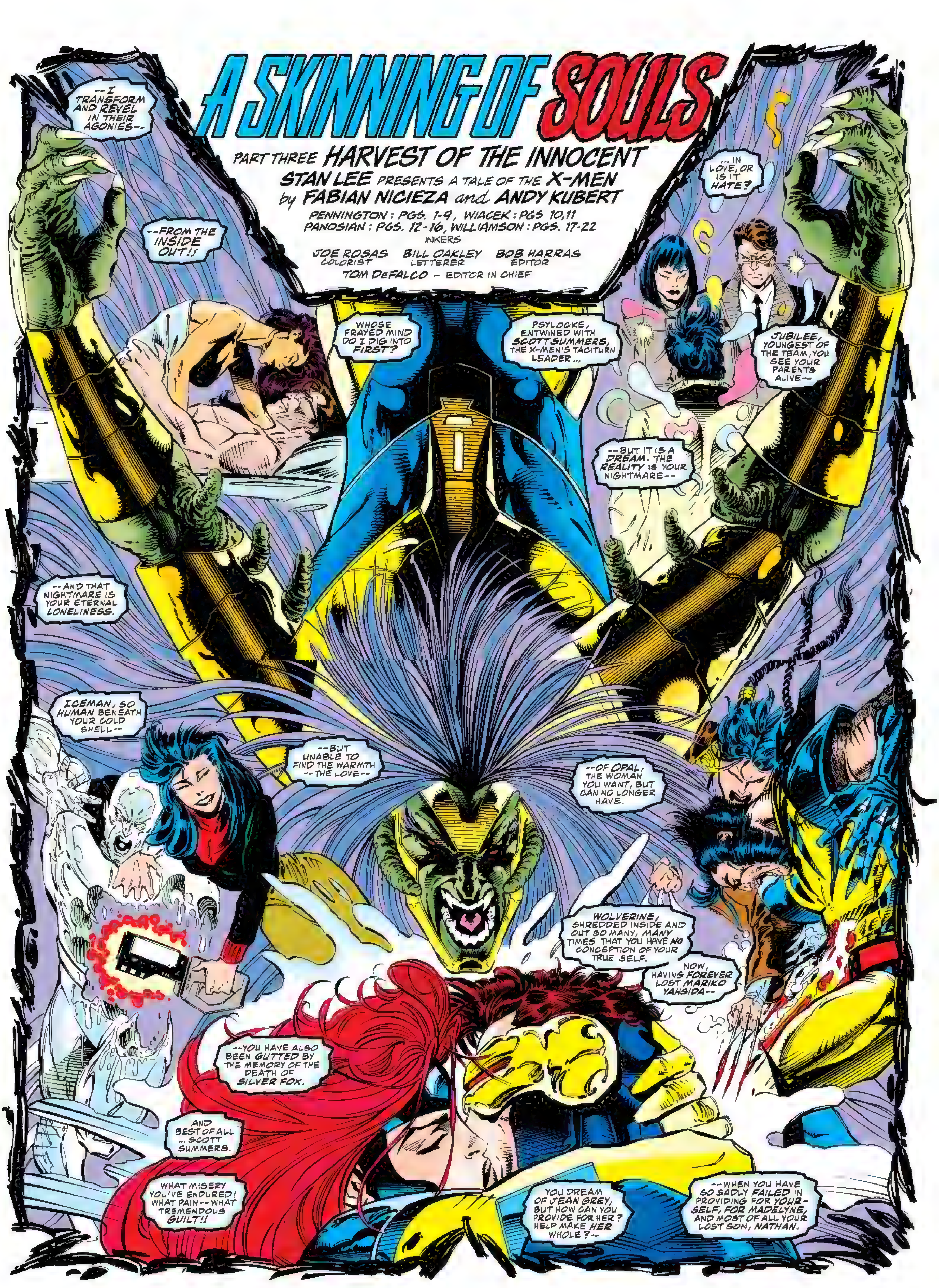
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
WHAT PRICE INNOCENCE?
30 YEARS
X-MEN
1963-1993
ANDY KUBERT
M. PENNINGTON

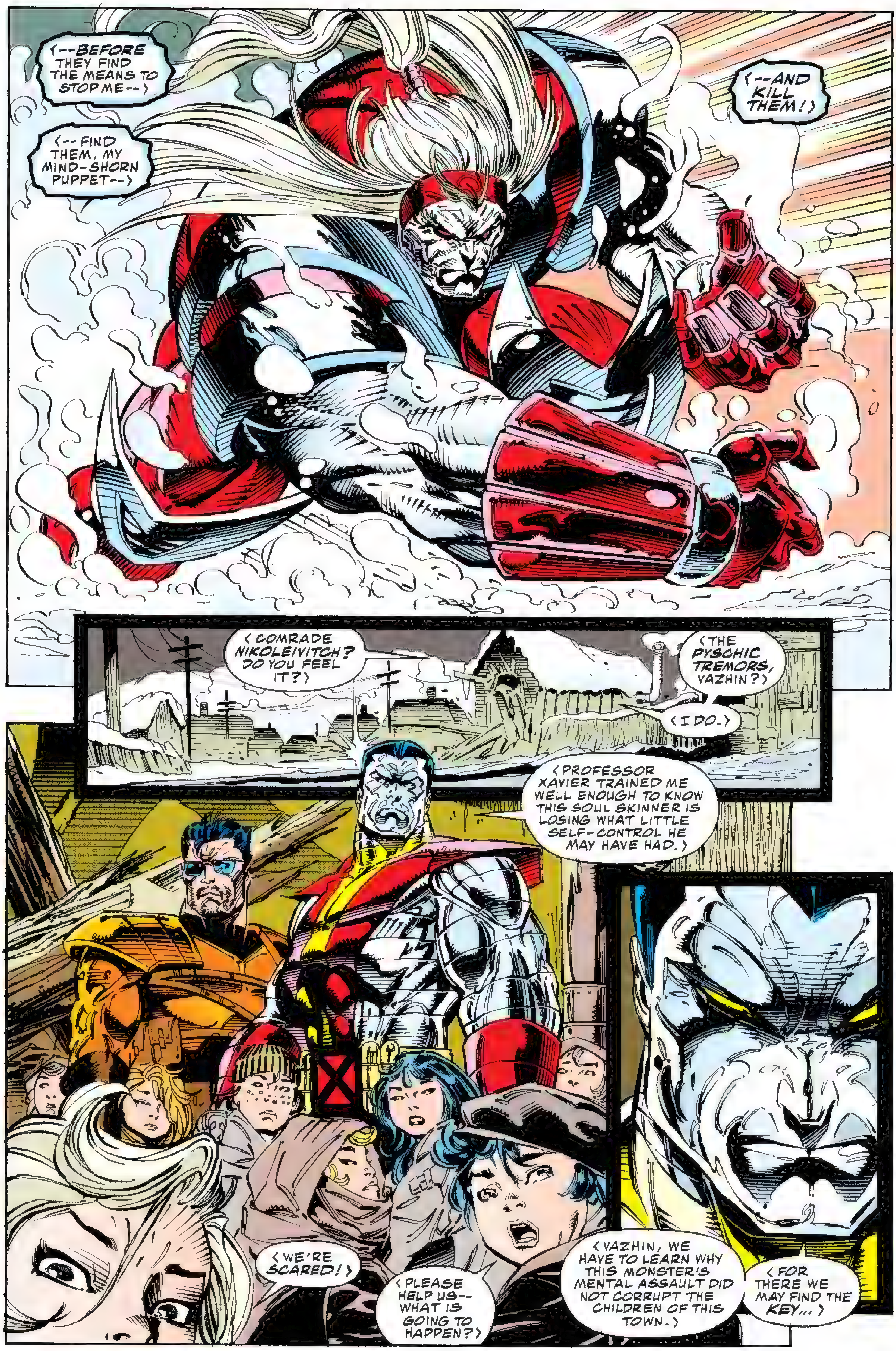

THEY ARE CONSIDERED HEROES. MARTYRS IN THE ENDLESS BATTLE FOR THE SALVATION OF MAN AND MUTANTKIND.
THEY ARE THE X-MEN. BLESSED WITH PARA-HUMAN POWERS, CURSED WITH THE DESIRE TO USE THEM RESPONSIBLY.
THEY CAME TO THE ISOLATED SIBERIAN TOWN OF NEFTELENSK IN ORDER TO STOP THE MENTAL DEGRADATION OF ITS TORTURED, DESPERATE CITIZENS.
THEY FACED THE PHYSICAL ONSLAUGHT OF A MIND-CONTROLLED OMEGA RED--
--AND THE MENTAL RAVISHING FROM THE MUTANT TELEPATHIC MIND SURGEON CALLED THE SKINNER OF SOULS.
THE X-MEN CAME TO DO WHAT THEY HAVE ALWAYS DONE. THEY CAME TO HELP. THEY CAME TO STOP EVIL MUTANTS.
THEY FAILED.
‹YOU DON'T FEEL THEIR PAIN, AS I DO, OMEGA RED.›
‹WHAT YOU MISS, MY FRIEND, YOU WILL NEVER KNOW!›
‹I CAN SENSE IT STRONGLY-- AND BY LINKING MINDS WITH THEM THROUGH THEIR TELEPATH...›
‹...THE ONE CALLED PSYLOCKE--›

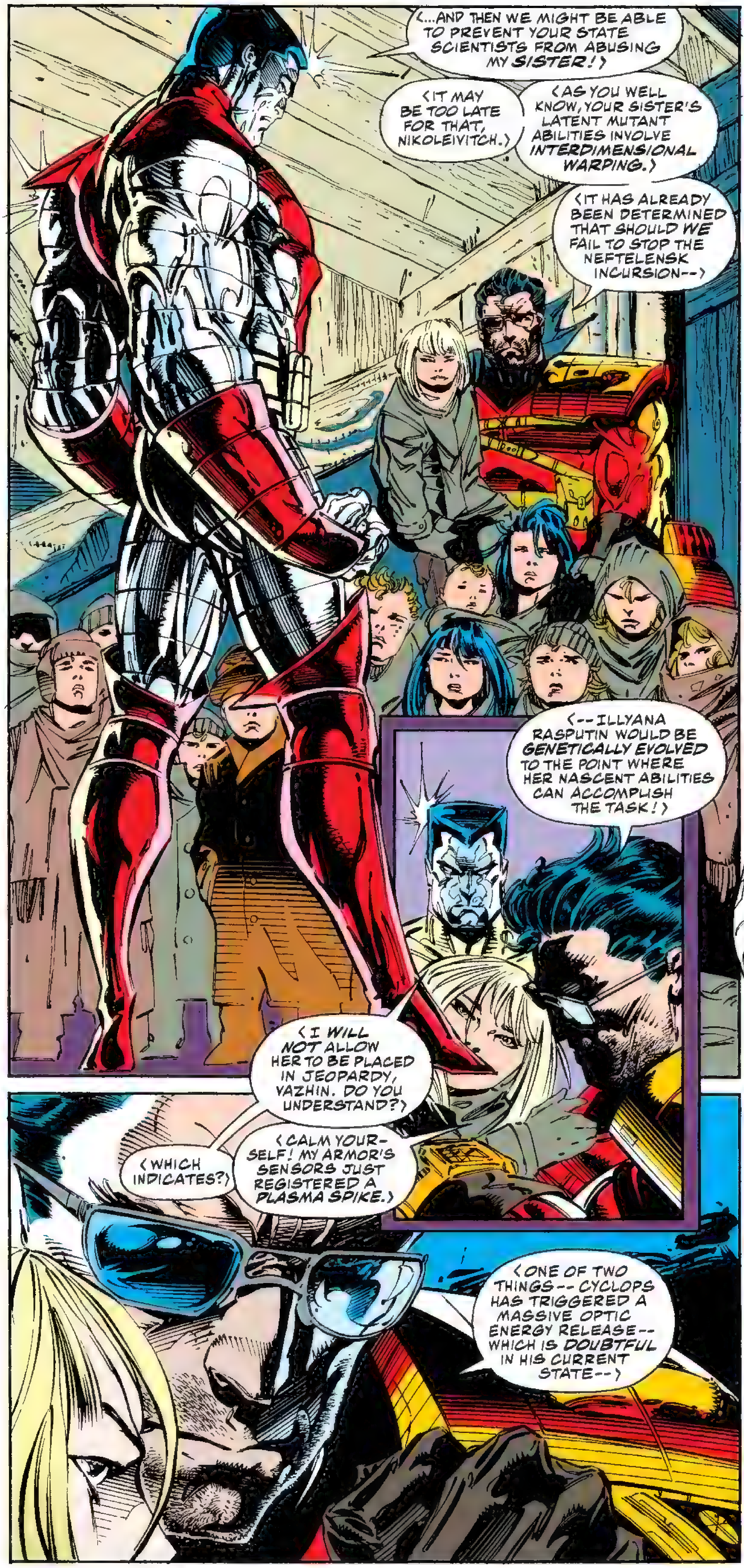

A SKINNING OF SOULS
PART THREE HARVEST OF THE INNOCENT
STAN LEE PRESENTS A TALE OF THE X-MEN
by FABIAN NICIEZA and ANDY KUBERT
PENNINGTON : PGS. 1-9, WIACEK : PGS 10,11
PANOSIAN : PGS. 12-16, WILLIAMSON : PGS. 17-22
INKERS
JOE ROSAS COLORIST
BILL OAKLEY LETTERER
BOB HARRAS EDITOR
TOM DeFALCO – EDITOR IN CHIEF
--I TRANSFORM AND REVEL IN THEIR AGONIES--
--FROM THE INSIDE OUT!!
WHOSE FRAYED MIND DO I DIG INTO FIRST?
PSYLOCKE, ENTWINED WITH SCOTT SUMMERS, THE X-MEN'S TACITURN LEADER...
...IN LOVE, OR IS IT HATE?
JUBILEE, YOUNGEST OF THE TEAM, YOU SEE YOUR PARENTS ALIVE--
--BUT IT IS A DREAM. THE REALITY IS YOUR NIGHTMARE--
--AND THAT NIGHTMARE IS YOUR ETERNAL LONELINESS.
ICEMAN, SO HUMAN BENEATH YOUR COLD SHELL--
--BUT UNABLE TO FIND THE WARMTH --THE LOVE--
--OF OPAL, THE WOMAN YOU WANT, BUT CAN NO LONGER HAVE.
WOLVERINE, SHREDDED INSIDE AND OUT SO MANY, MANY TIMES THAT YOU HAVE NO CONCEPTION OF YOUR TRUE SELF.
NOW, HAVING FOREVER LOST MARIKO YAHSIDA--
--YOU HAVE ALSO BEEN GUTTED BY THE MEMORY OF THE DEATH OF SILVER FOX.
AND BEST OF ALL ...SCOTT SUMMERS.
WHAT MISERY YOU'VE ENDURED! WHAT PAIN--WHAT TREMENDOUS GUILT!!
YOU DREAM OF JEAN GREY, BUT HOW CAN YOU PROVIDE FOR HER? HELP MAKE HER WHOLE?--
--WHEN YOU HAVE SO SADLY FAILED IN PROVIDING FOR YOURSELF, FOR MADELYNE, AND MOST OF ALL YOUR LOST SON, NATHAN.

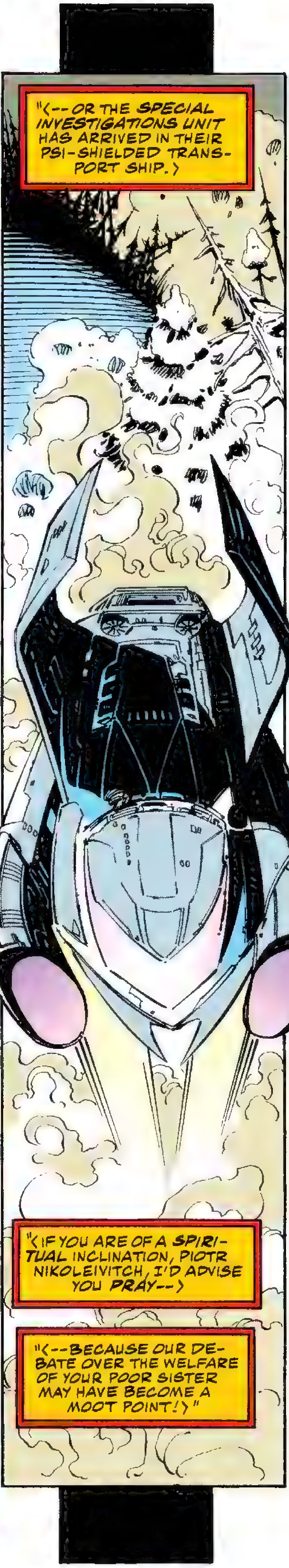
HOW HAVE YOU *SURVIVED* ALL THIS CONTINUOUS TORMENT, SUMMERS?
HOW CAN YOU FACE TOMORROW WITH *ANY* SEMBLANCE OF *HOPE* FOR WHAT THE NEW DAY WILL BRING?
ARE YOU *THAT* MUCH STRONGER THAN I AM, SUMMERS? WHEN OUR SINS ARE SO SIMILAR?
LITTLE *OSKANA*, I MISS YOU SO, CHILD.
I *TRIED* TO EASE YOUR PAIN.
I DID THE VERY THING I HAD SWORN *NEVER* TO DO--
I *ENTERED* YOUR *MIND*--
--I TRIED TO INFLUENCE YOUR THOUGHTS, TO *EASE* YOUR PAIN--
--BUT I COULD NOT EVEN DO *THAT* FOR YOU--
--I COULD ONLY FEEL YOU SLIP AWAY.
SO LIKE YOUR AGONY, SUMMERS--
--WHEN FACED WITH THE BITTER CHOICE OF SAVING YOUR DYING SON--
--AND LOSING HIM FOREVER. HOW IT HAUNTS YOU!
COULD I HAVE DONE MORE, OSKANA?
COULD YOUR *MOTHER*?
YOUR DEATH SHATTERED MY LIFE IN MORE WAYS THAN ONE, DAUGHTER.
FOR I LEARNED OF YOUR MOTHER'S *SECRET*.
OF HER *EMPLOYMENT* BY THE *STATE* TO WATCH OVER MY VERY EXISTENCE!
A *FLAGWATCH* SHE CALLED HERSELF.

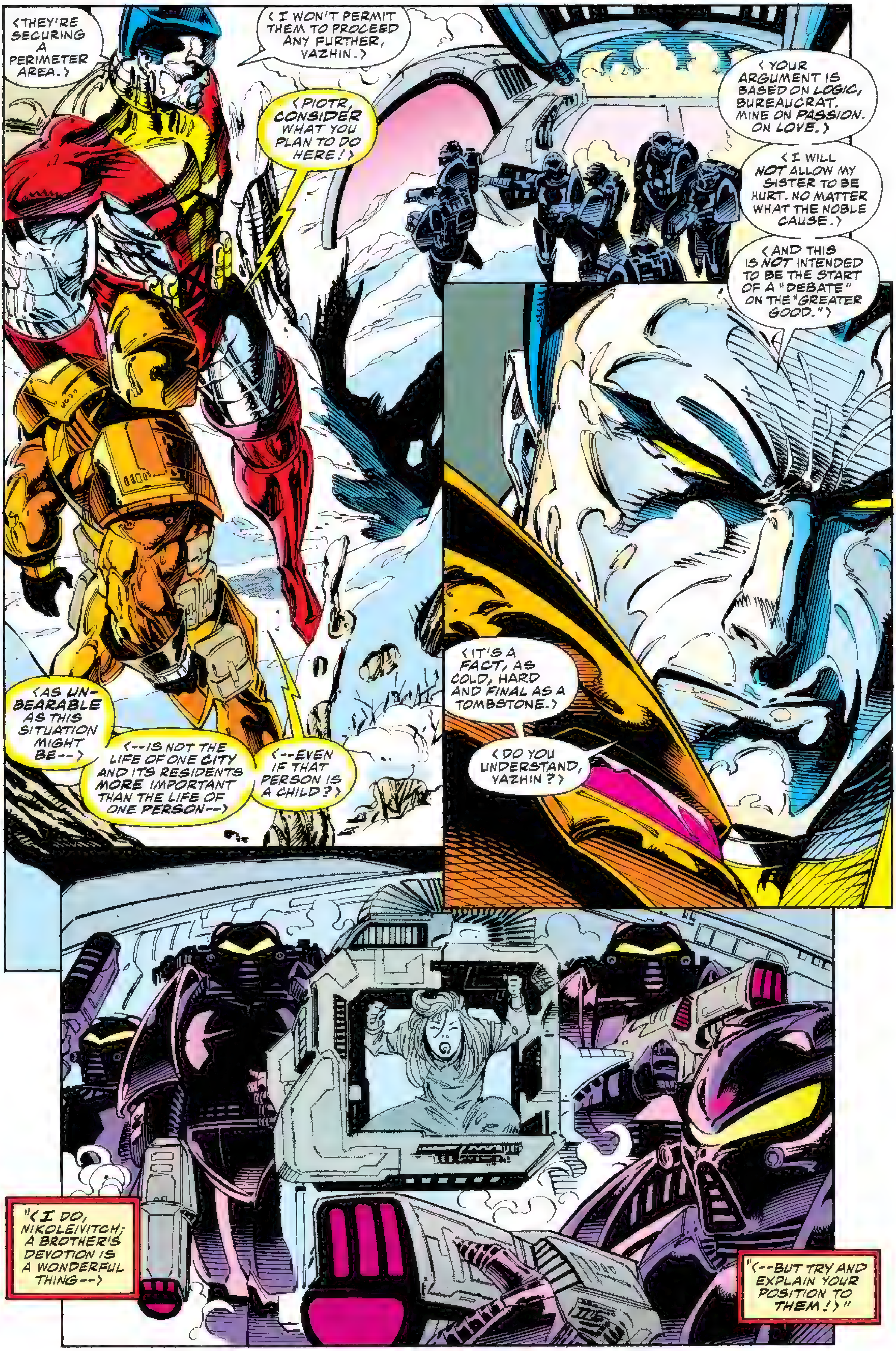
AND I WAS THE MUTANT SHE WAS ASSIGNED TO OBSERVE... LIKE A PATHETIC ANIMAL IN THE ZOO.
FOR FOURTEEN YEARS, SHE KNEW ME IN WAYS I DID NOT KNOW HER.
SHE DID NOTHING TO TRY AND USE HER STATE TIES TO SAVE YOU, DAUGHTER.
HER PRECIOUS EMPLOYMENT WAS DEEMED MORE IMPORTANT THAN YOUR VERY LIFE!
SO I GAVE MY BELOVED WIFE THE CHANCE TO FULFILL HER APPOINTED TASK--
--LET HER WATCH AS I OPENED MY MUTANT MIND--
--AND SHREDDED HER BODY AND SOUL, AS SHE HAD DONE TO YOU-- AND TO ME!
‹AND NOW?›*
‹NOW I LIVE ONLY TO FIND PAIN IN OTHERS.›
‹AND I CANNOT STOP-- OR BE STOPPED-- UNTIL I HAVE SHOWN EVERYONE THE PAIN I HAVE FELT--›
‹--THE LOSS --THE GUILT-- THE FAILURE...›
‹OMEGA RED, THE ONES WHO ESCAPED...?›
‹STATE SECURITY AGENT VAZHIN AND THE X-MAN CODE-NAMED COLOSSUS--?›
‹YES. FIND THEM. STOP THEM.›
‹BEFORE THEY HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO DISCOVER MY HIDDEN SECRET--›

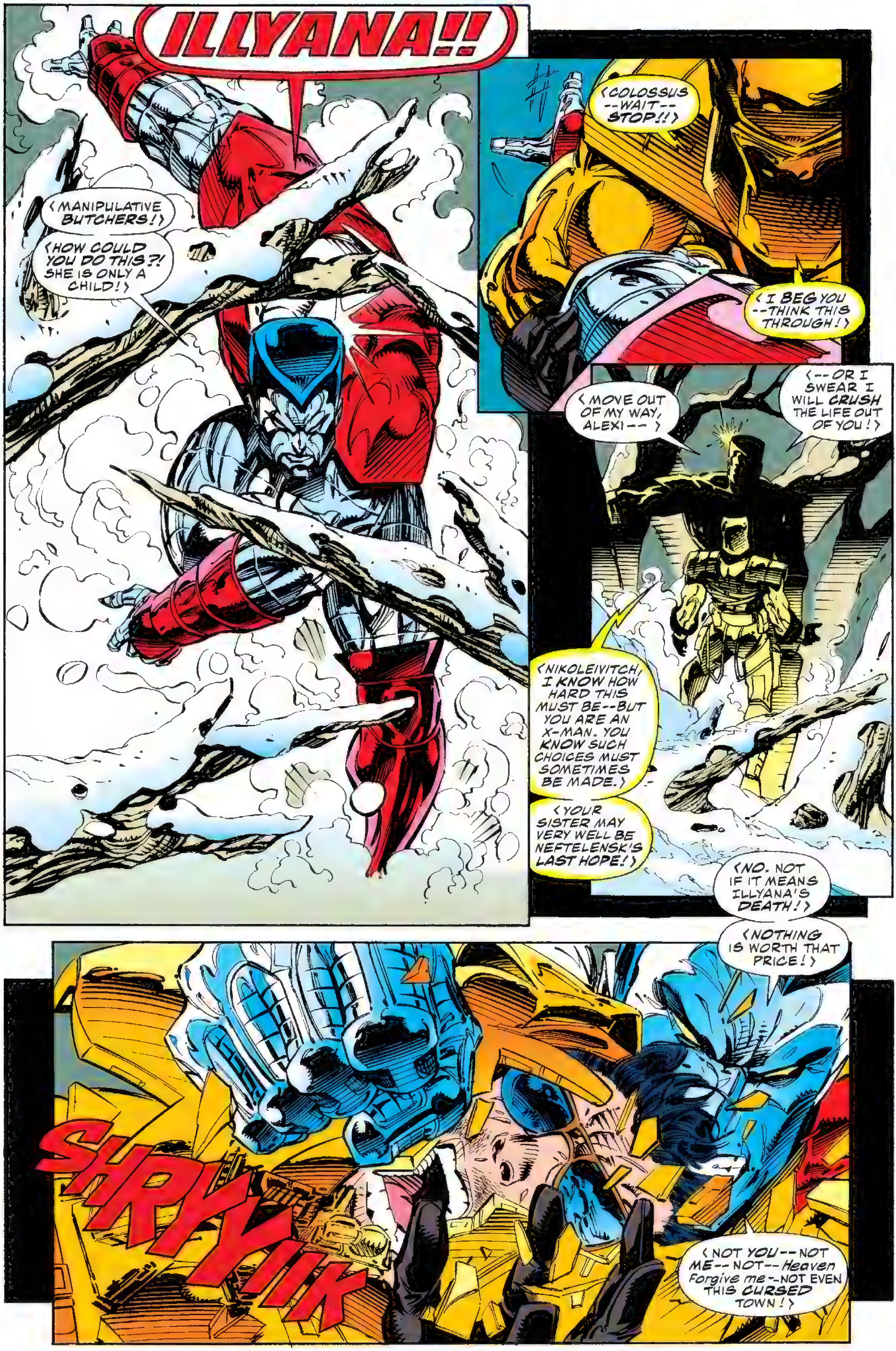
* TRANSLATED FROM THE RUSSIAN--BOB

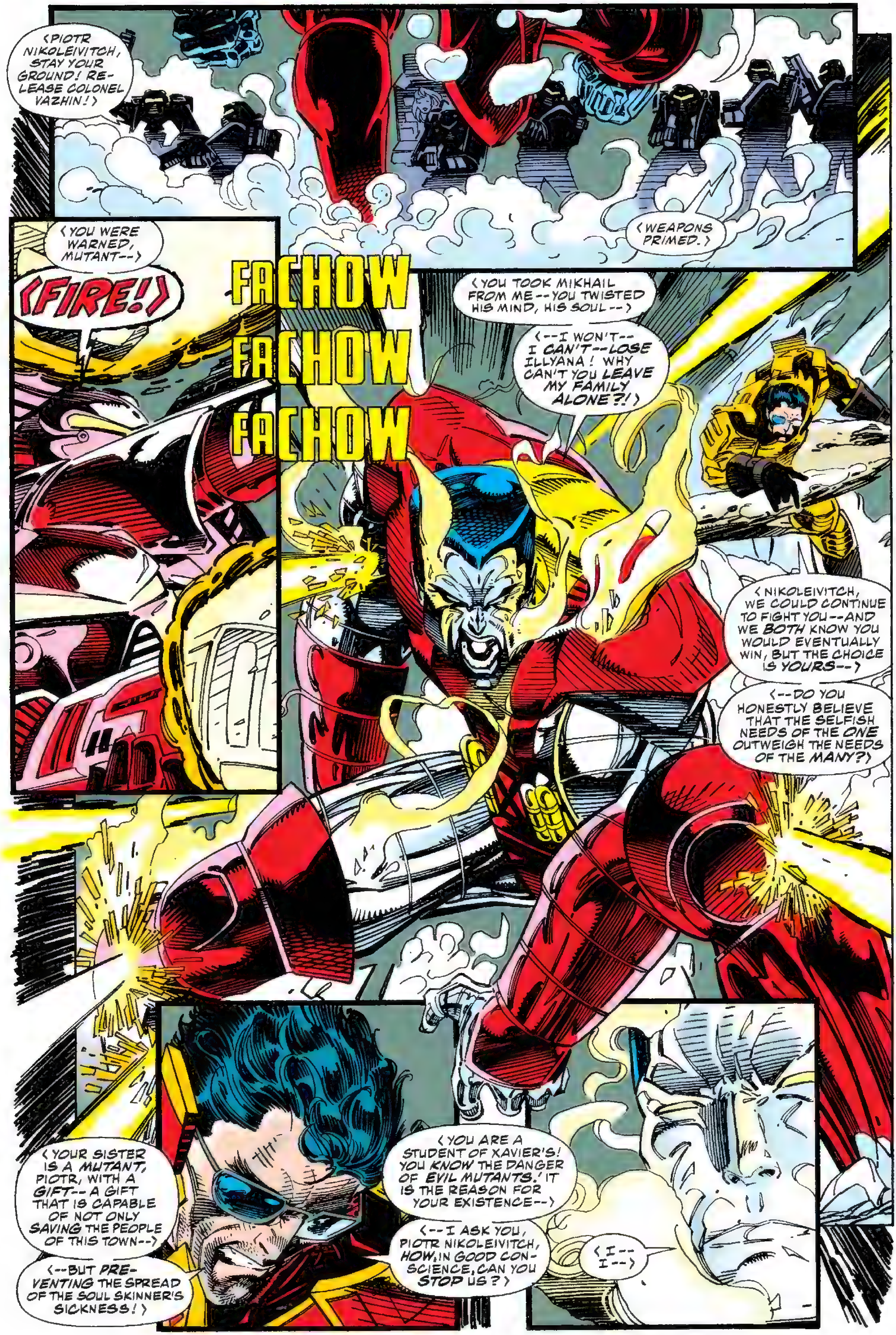

‹--BEFORE THEY FIND THE MEANS TO STOP ME--›
‹--FIND THEM, MY MIND-SHORN PUPPET--›
‹--AND KILL THEM!›
‹COMRADE NIKOLEIVITCH? DO YOU FEEL IT?›
‹THE PYSCHIC TREMORS, VAZHIN?›
‹I DO.›
‹PROFESSOR XAVIER TRAINED ME WELL ENOUGH TO KNOW THIS SOUL SKINNER IS LOSING WHAT LITTLE SELF-CONTROL HE MAY HAVE HAD.›
‹WE'RE SCARED!›
‹PLEASE HELP US--WHAT IS GOING TO HAPPEN?›
‹VAZHIN, WE HAVE TO LEARN WHY THIS MONSTER'S MENTAL ASSAULT DID NOT CORRUPT THE CHILDREN OF THIS TOWN.›
‹FOR THERE WE MAY FIND THE KEY...›


‹...AND THEN WE MIGHT BE ABLE TO PREVENT YOUR STATE SCIENTISTS FROM ABUSING MY *SISTER!*›
‹IT MAY BE TOO LATE FOR THAT, NIKOLEIVITCH.›
‹AS YOU WELL KNOW, YOUR SISTER'S LATENT MUTANT ABILITIES INVOLVE *INTERDIMENSIONAL WARPING.*›
‹IT HAS ALREADY BEEN DETERMINED THAT SHOULD *WE* FAIL TO STOP THE NEFTELENSK INCURSION--›
‹--ILLYANA RASPUTIN WOULD BE *GENETICALLY EVOLVED* TO THE POINT WHERE HER NASCENT ABILITIES CAN ACCOMPLISH THE TASK!›
‹I *WILL NOT* ALLOW HER TO BE PLACED IN JEOPARDY, VAZHIN. DO YOU UNDERSTAND?›
‹WHICH INDICATES?›
‹CALM YOURSELF! MY ARMOR'S SENSORS JUST REGISTERED A *PLASMA SPIKE.*›
‹ONE OF TWO THINGS--CYCLOPS HAS TRIGGERED A MASSIVE OPTIC ENERGY RELEASE--WHICH IS *DOUBTFUL* IN HIS CURRENT STATE--›

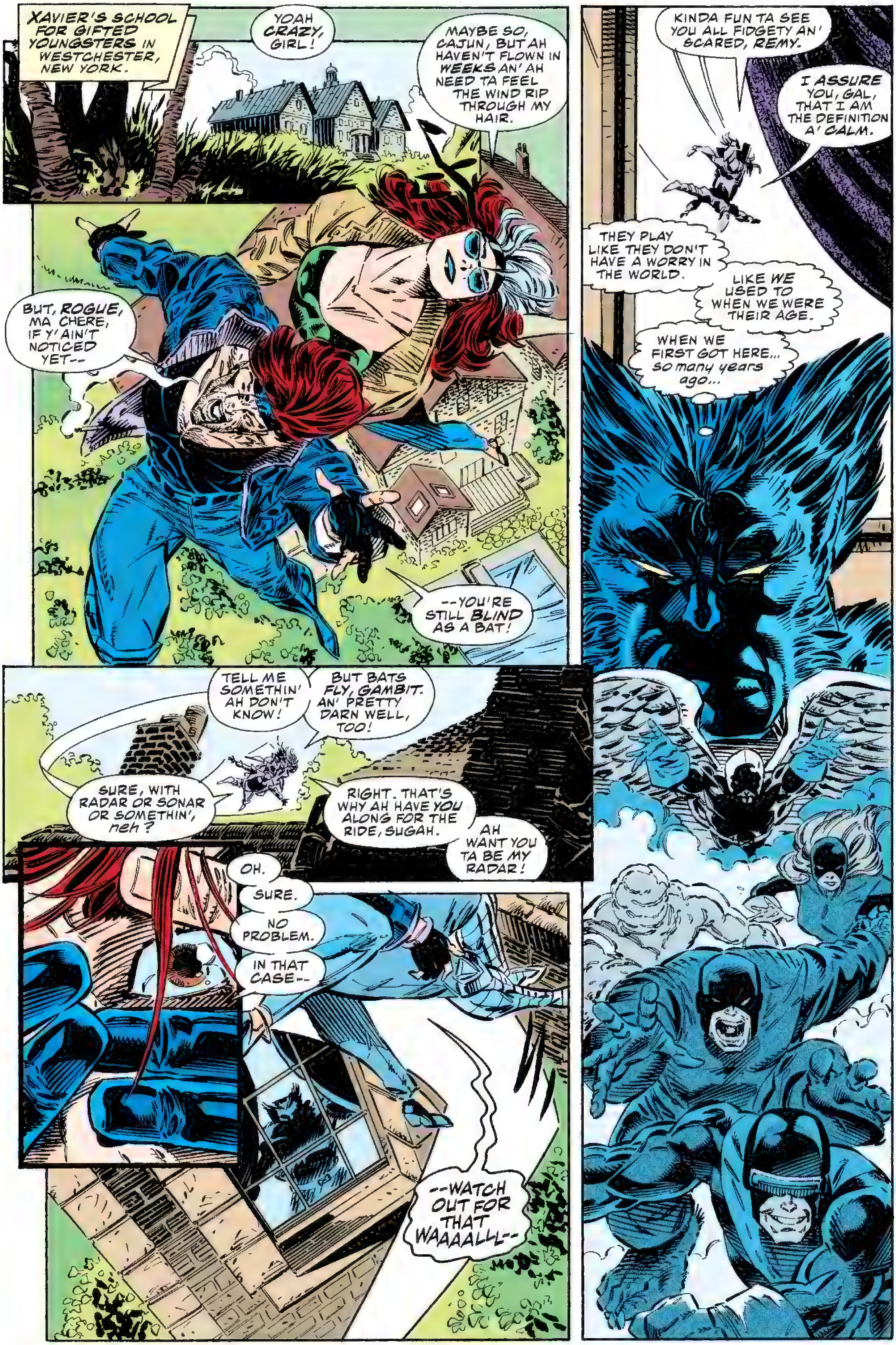

"‹--OR THE *SPECIAL INVESTIGATIONS UNIT* HAS ARRIVED IN THEIR PSI-SHIELDED TRANSPORT SHIP.›
"‹IF YOU ARE OF A *SPIRITUAL* INCLINATION, PIOTR NIKOLEIVITCH, I'D ADVISE YOU *PRAY*--›
"‹--BECAUSE OUR DEBATE OVER THE WELFARE OF YOUR POOR SISTER MAY HAVE BECOME A MOOT POINT!›"

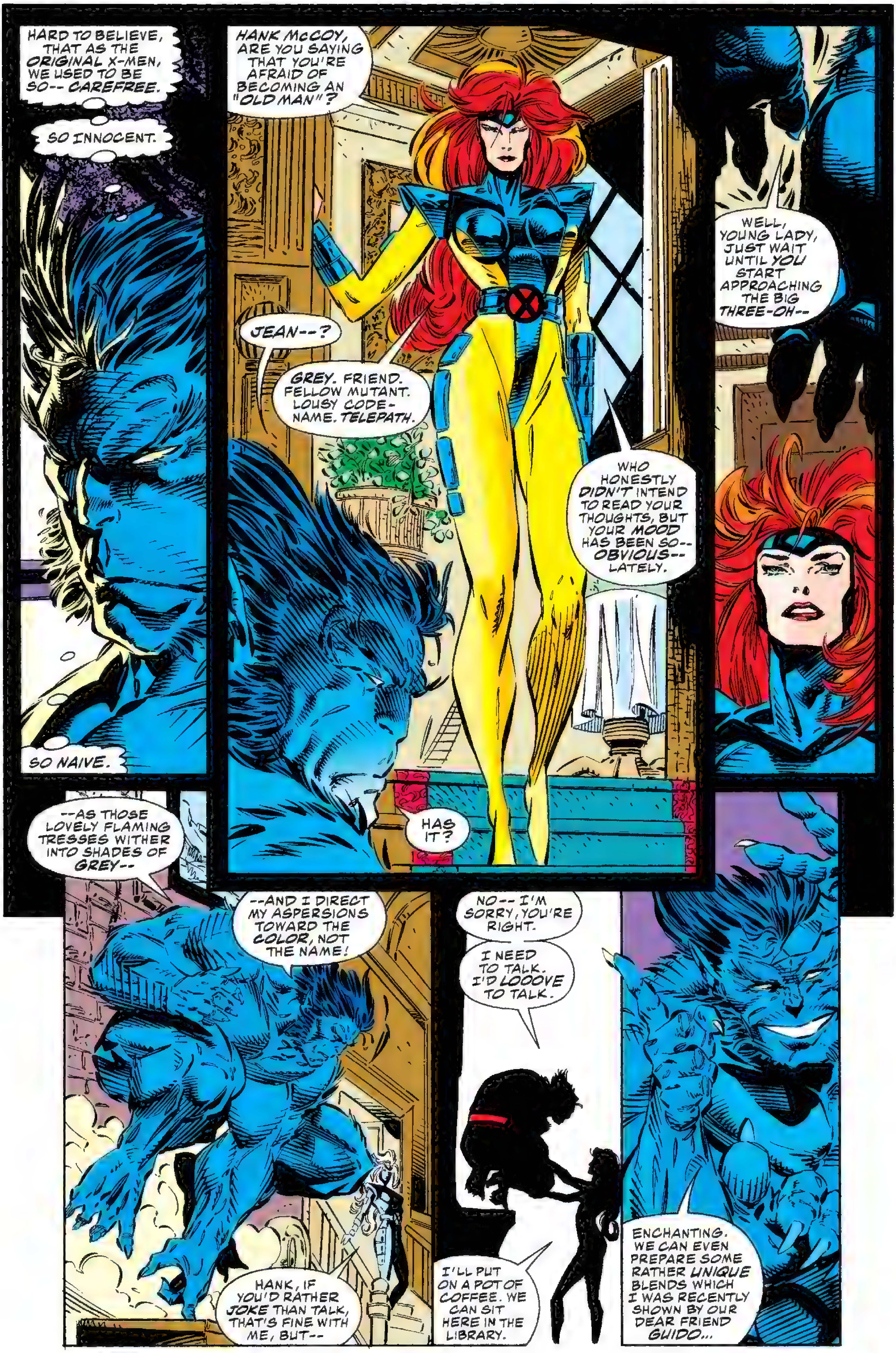

‹THEY'RE SECURING A PERIMETER AREA.›
‹I WON'T PERMIT THEM TO PROCEED ANY FURTHER, VAZHIN.›
‹PIOTR, CONSIDER WHAT YOU PLAN TO DO HERE!›
‹YOUR ARGUMENT IS BASED ON LOGIC, BUREAUCRAT. MINE ON PASSION. ON LOVE.›
‹I WILL NOT ALLOW MY SISTER TO BE HURT. NO MATTER WHAT THE NOBLE CAUSE.›
‹AND THIS IS NOT INTENDED TO BE THE START OF A "DEBATE" ON THE "GREATER GOOD."›
‹AS UNBEARABLE AS THIS SITUATION MIGHT BE--›
‹--IS NOT THE LIFE OF ONE CITY AND ITS RESIDENTS MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE LIFE OF ONE PERSON--›
‹--EVEN IF THAT PERSON IS A CHILD?›
‹IT'S A FACT, AS COLD, HARD AND FINAL AS A TOMBSTONE.›
‹DO YOU UNDERSTAND, VAZHIN?›
"‹I DO, NIKOLEIVITCH; A BROTHER'S DEVOTION IS A WONDERFUL THING--›
"‹--BUT TRY AND EXPLAIN YOUR POSITION TO THEM!›"


ILLYANA!!
‹MANIPULATIVE BUTCHERS!›
‹HOW COULD YOU DO THIS?! SHE IS ONLY A CHILD!›
‹COLOSSUS --WAIT-- STOP!!›
‹I BEG YOU --THINK THIS THROUGH!›
‹MOVE OUT OF MY WAY, ALEXI-- ›
‹--OR I SWEAR I WILL CRUSH THE LIFE OUT OF YOU!›
‹NIKOLEIVITCH, I KNOW HOW HARD THIS MUST BE--BUT YOU ARE AN X-MAN. YOU KNOW SUCH CHOICES MUST SOMETIMES BE MADE.›
‹YOUR SISTER MAY VERY WELL BE NEFTELENSK'S LAST HOPE!›
‹NO. NOT IF IT MEANS ILLYANA'S DEATH!›
‹NOTHING IS WORTH THAT PRICE!›
SHRYIIK
‹NOT YOU--NOT ME--NOT--Heaven forgive me--NOT EVEN THIS CURSED TOWN!›

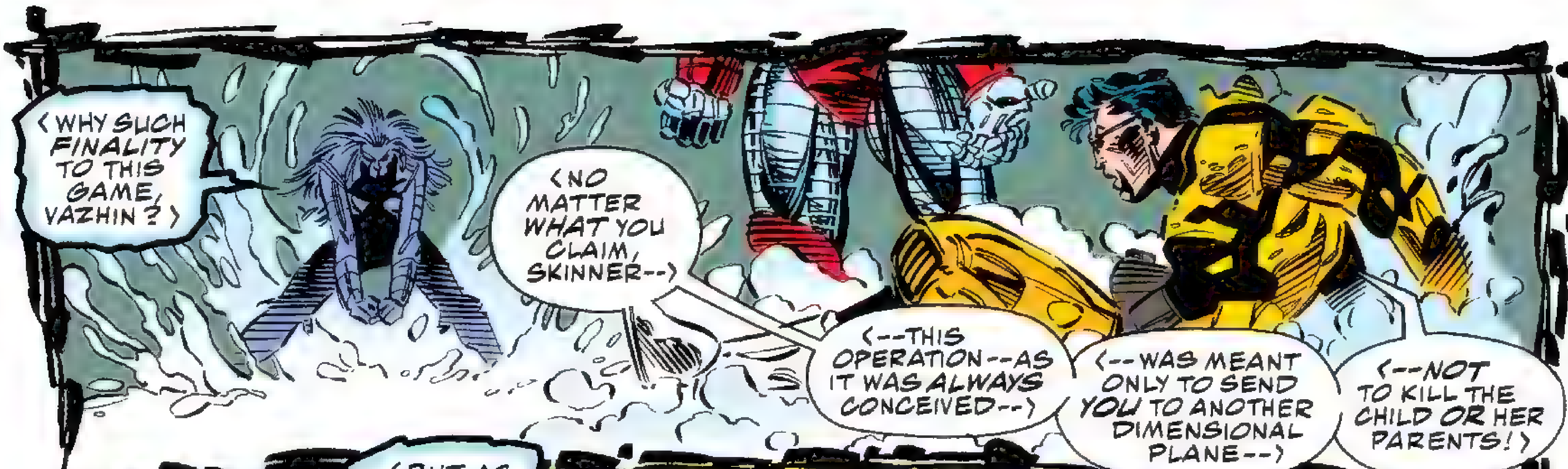

‹PIOTR NIKOLEIVITCH, STAY YOUR GROUND! RELEASE COLONEL VAZHIN!›
‹WEAPONS PRIMED.›
‹YOU WERE WARNED, MUTANT--›
‹FIRE!›
FACHOW
FACHOW
FACHOW
‹YOU TOOK MIKHAIL FROM ME--YOU TWISTED HIS MIND, HIS SOUL--›
‹--I WON'T-- I CAN'T--LOSE ILLYANA! WHY CAN'T YOU LEAVE MY FAMILY ALONE?!›
‹NIKOLEIVITCH, WE COULD CONTINUE TO FIGHT YOU--AND WE BOTH KNOW YOU WOULD EVENTUALLY WIN, BUT THE CHOICE IS YOURS--›
‹--DO YOU HONESTLY BELIEVE THAT THE SELFISH NEEDS OF THE ONE OUTWEIGH THE NEEDS OF THE MANY?›
‹YOUR SISTER IS A MUTANT, PIOTR, WITH A GIFT-- A GIFT THAT IS CAPABLE OF NOT ONLY SAVING THE PEOPLE OF THIS TOWN--›
‹--BUT PREVENTING THE SPREAD OF THE SOUL SKINNER'S SICKNESS!›
‹YOU ARE A STUDENT OF XAVIER'S! YOU KNOW THE DANGER OF EVIL MUTANTS! IT IS THE REASON FOR YOUR EXISTENCE--›
‹--I ASK YOU, PIOTR NIKOLEIVITCH, HOW, IN GOOD CONSCIENCE, CAN YOU STOP US?›
‹I-- I--›

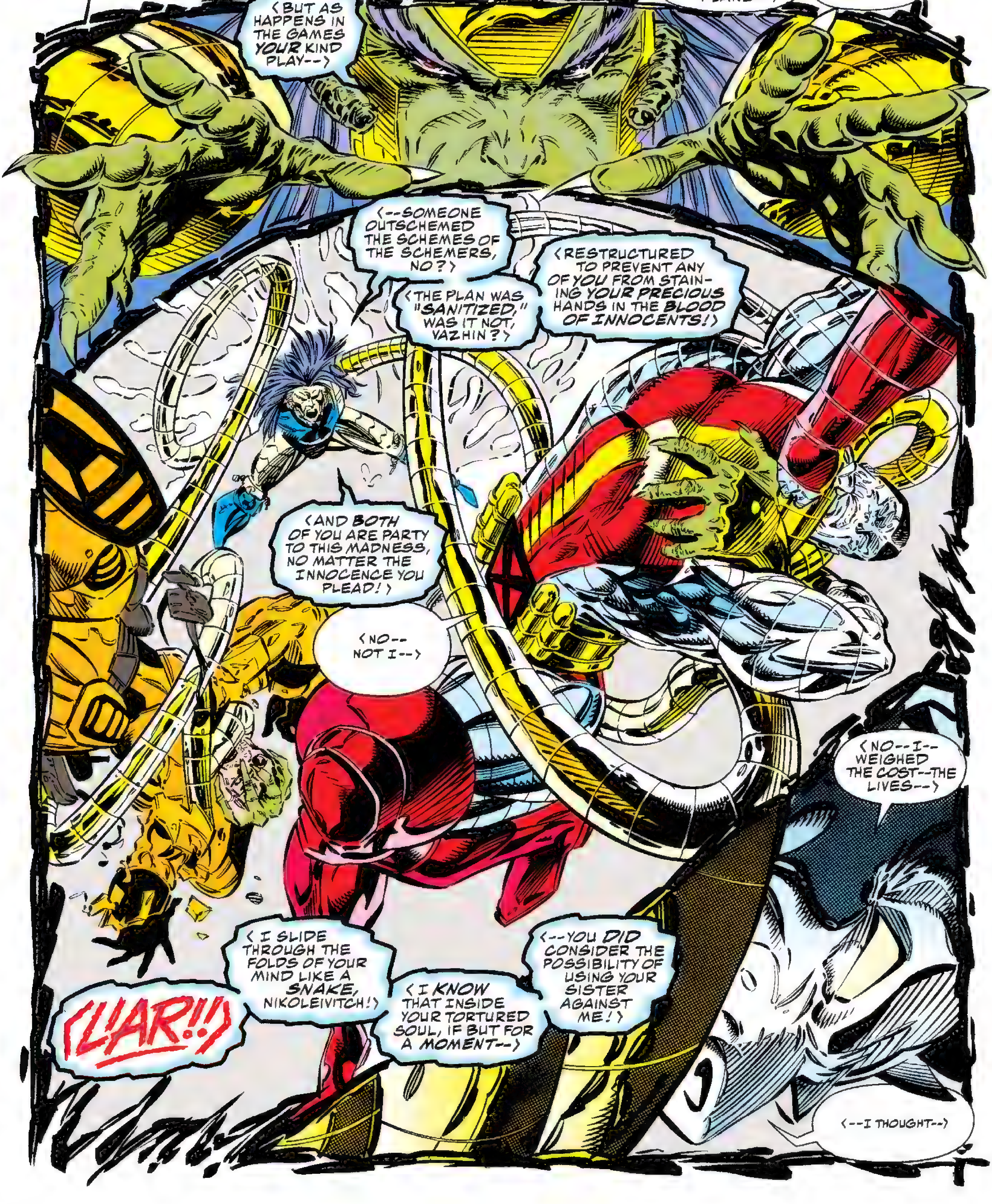
YEEAAARRGH!
‹tsk, tsk›
‹DON'T WEAKEN NOW, X-MAN, FOR YOU ONLY KNOW HALF THE STORY!›
‹THESE STATE AGENTS HAVE MUCH TO REVEAL TO YOU, NIKOLEIVITCH.›
‹ALLOW ME THE LUXURY--oh, say it, you cad--THE PLEASURE--OF SHOWING YOU WHAT THEIR MINDS HAVE ALREADY SHOWN ME--›
‹--OPEN YOURSELF UP, YOU RAW, UNYIELDING POWER-HOUSE--›
‹--LET ME PEEL YOU OPEN, LAYER BY LAYER, AND FEED YOU THE PULPY ANGUISH OF OTHERS--›
‹--THE ANGUISH OF YOUR VERY PARENTS, PIOTR NIKOLEIVITCH--›
‹--AS THEY WERE GUNNED DOWN--MURDERED, PIOTR, BUTCHERED--IN YOUR HOME JUST HOURS AGO!!›
NO--!
--MOMMA--
--POPPA--
NNOOOOOOOOOoooo


XAVIER'S SCHOOL FOR GIFTED YOUNGSTERS IN WESTCHESTER, NEW YORK.
YOAH CRAZY, GIRL!
MAYBE SO, CAJUN, BUT AH HAVEN'T FLOWN IN WEEKS AN' AH NEED TA FEEL THE WIND RIP THROUGH MY HAIR.
BUT, ROGUE, MA CHERE, IF Y' AIN'T NOTICED YET--
--YOU'RE STILL BLIND AS A BAT!
TELL ME SOMETHIN' AH DON'T KNOW!
BUT BATS FLY, GAMBIT. AN' PRETTY DARN WELL, TOO!
SURE, WITH RADAR OR SONAR OR SOMETHIN', neh?
RIGHT. THAT'S WHY AH HAVE YOU ALONG FOR THE RIDE, SUGAH.
AH WANT YOU TA BE MY RADAR!
OH.
SURE.
NO PROBLEM.
IN THAT CASE--
--WATCH OUT FOR THAT WAAAALLL--
KINDA FUN TA SEE YOU ALL FIDGETY AN' SCARED, REMY.
I ASSURE YOU, GAL, THAT I AM THE DEFINITION A' CALM.
THEY PLAY LIKE THEY DON'T HAVE A WORRY IN THE WORLD.
LIKE WE USED TO WHEN WE WERE THEIR AGE.
WHEN WE FIRST GOT HERE... so many years ago...

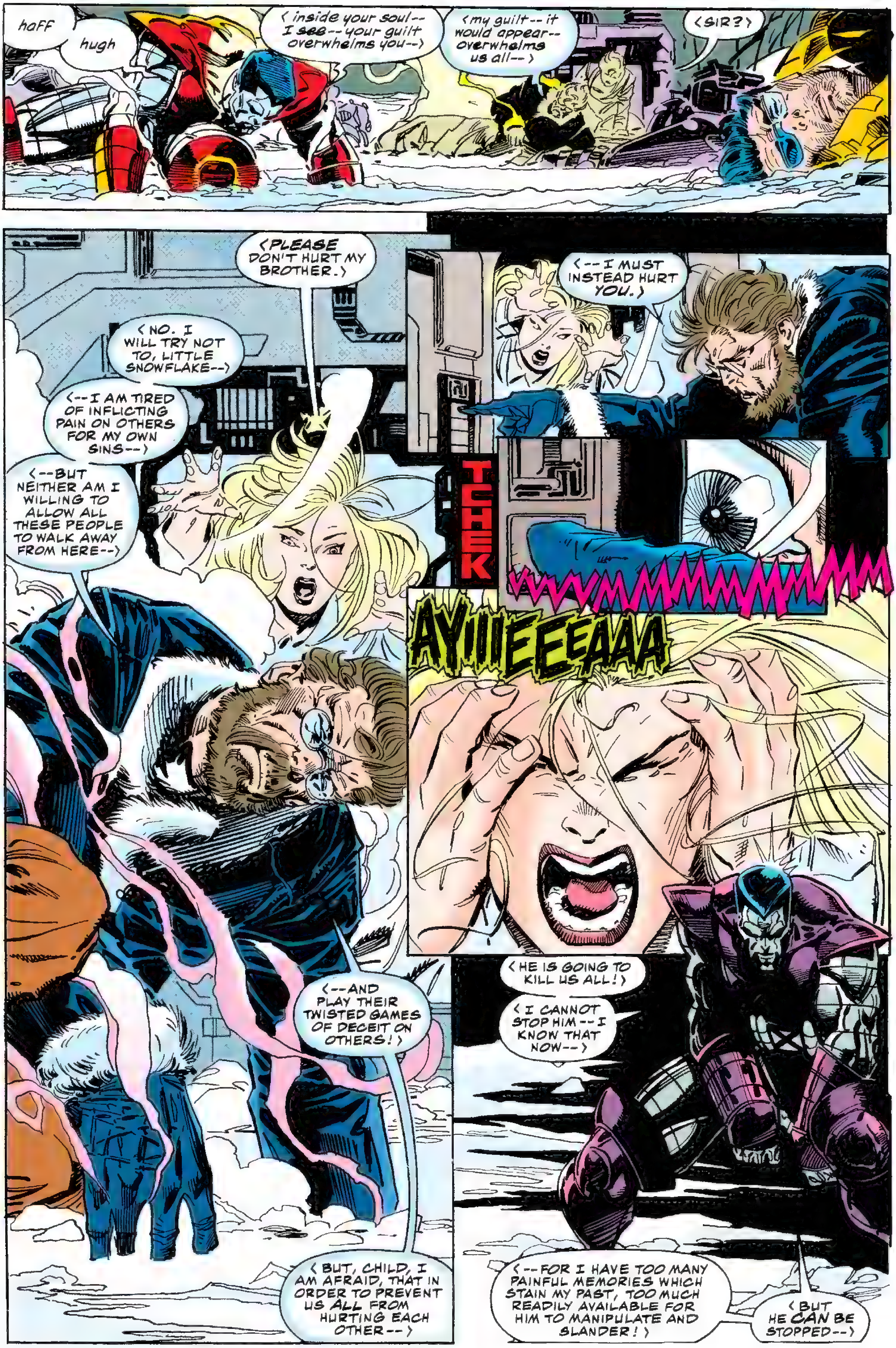

HARD TO BELIEVE, THAT AS THE ORIGINAL X-MEN, WE USED TO BE SO-- CAREFREE.
SO INNOCENT.
SO NAIVE.
HANK McCOY, ARE YOU SAYING THAT YOU'RE AFRAID OF BECOMING AN "OLD MAN"?
JEAN--?
GREY. FRIEND. FELLOW MUTANT. LOUSY CODE-NAME. TELEPATH.
WHO HONESTLY DIDN'T INTEND TO READ YOUR THOUGHTS, BUT YOUR MOOD HAS BEEN SO-- OBVIOUS-- LATELY.
HAS IT?
WELL, YOUNG LADY, JUST WAIT UNTIL YOU START APPROACHING THE BIG THREE-OH--
--AS THOSE LOVELY FLAMING TRESSES WITHER INTO SHADES OF GREY--
--AND I DIRECT MY ASPERSIONS TOWARD THE COLOR, NOT THE NAME!
HANK, IF YOU'D RATHER JOKE THAN TALK, THAT'S FINE WITH ME, BUT--
NO-- I'M SORRY, YOU'RE RIGHT.
I NEED TO TALK. I'D LOOOVE TO TALK.
I'LL PUT ON A POT OF COFFEE. WE CAN SIT HERE IN THE LIBRARY.
ENCHANTING. WE CAN EVEN PREPARE SOME RATHER UNIQUE BLENDS WHICH I WAS RECENTLY SHOWN BY OUR DEAR FRIEND GUIDO...

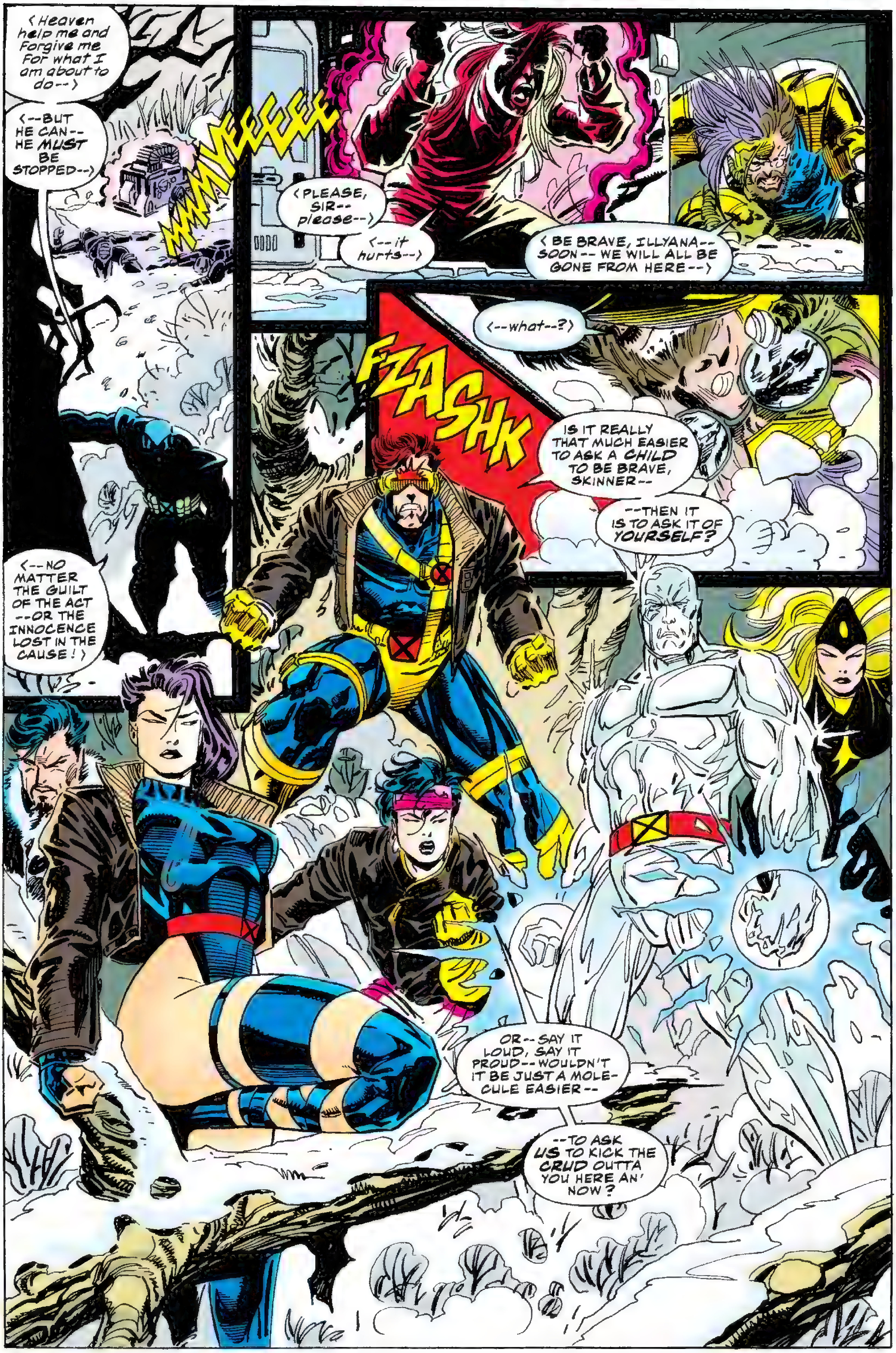
<YOU>
<NO--PIOTR --NO-->
<--I SWEAR TO YOU--THAT WAS NEVER THE INTENTION OF THE FLAGWATCH AGENDA!>
<YOU CLAIM TO BE IGNORANT OF WHAT YOUR OWN PEOPLE WERE DOING?!>
<KILLED>
<MY>
<PARENTS!!>
<THE OPERATION CALLED FOR THE GENETIC ACCELERATION OF YOUR SISTER, YES-->
<--BUT YOUR PARENTS WERE NOT TO BE HARMED!>
<I DON'T KNOW WHY THEY WERE KILLED, PIOTR! I-->
<BECAUSE IT WAS EXPEDIENT, YOU IGNORANT BUTCHER! AND THE STATE LOVES EXPEDIENCE, NO MATTER THE COST!>
<Dear God, how you RUIN people's lives!>
<THEY KILLED THE PARENTS OF PIOTR NIKOLEIVITCH BECAUSE THEY WERE CERTAIN THE GIRL, ILLYANA, WOULD DIE TRYING TO STOP ME!!>


‹WHY SUCH *FINALITY* TO THIS GAME, VAZHIN?›
‹NO MATTER *WHAT* YOU CLAIM, SKINNER--›
‹--THIS OPERATION--AS IT WAS *ALWAYS* CONCEIVED--›
‹--WAS MEANT ONLY TO SEND *YOU* TO ANOTHER DIMENSIONAL PLANE--›
‹--*NOT* TO KILL THE CHILD *OR* HER PARENTS!›

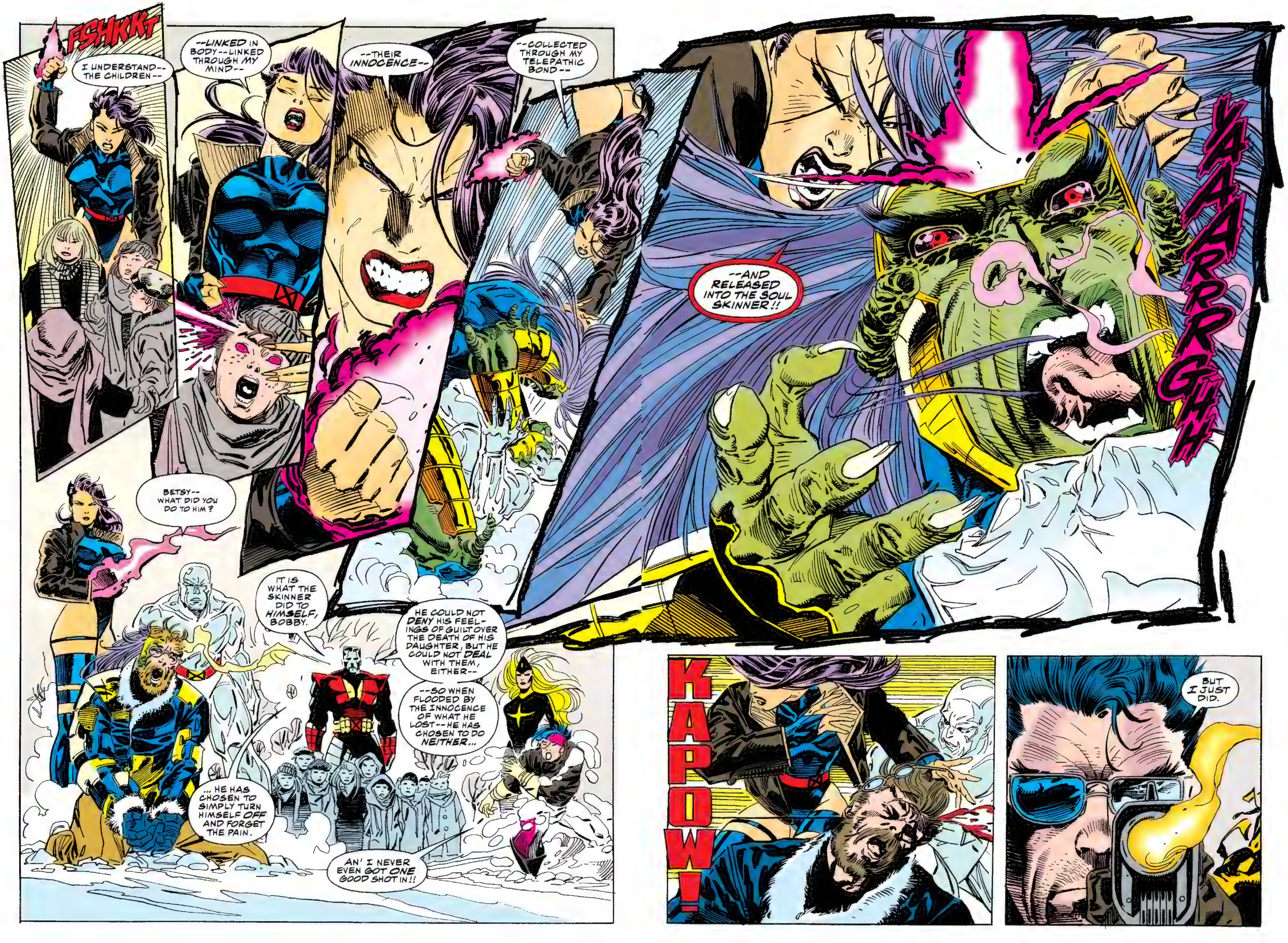

‹BUT AS HAPPENS IN THE GAMES *YOUR* KIND PLAY--›
‹--SOMEONE OUTSCHEMED THE SCHEMES OF THE SCHEMERS, NO?›
‹THE PLAN WAS *"SANITIZED,"* WAS IT NOT, VAZHIN?›
‹RESTRUCTURED TO PREVENT ANY OF *YOU* FROM STAINING *YOUR PRECIOUS* HANDS IN THE *BLOOD OF INNOCENTS!*›
‹AND *BOTH* OF YOU ARE PARTY TO THIS MADNESS, NO MATTER THE INNOCENCE YOU PLEAD!›
‹NO-- NOT I--›
‹NO--I-- WEIGHED THE COST--THE LIVES--›
‹--I THOUGHT--›
‹LIAR!!›
‹I SLIDE THROUGH THE FOLDS OF YOUR MIND LIKE A *SNAKE*, NIKOLEIVITCH!›
‹I *KNOW* THAT INSIDE YOUR TORTURED SOUL, IF BUT FOR A *MOMENT*--›
‹--YOU *DID* CONSIDER THE POSSIBILITY OF USING YOUR SISTER AGAINST ME!›

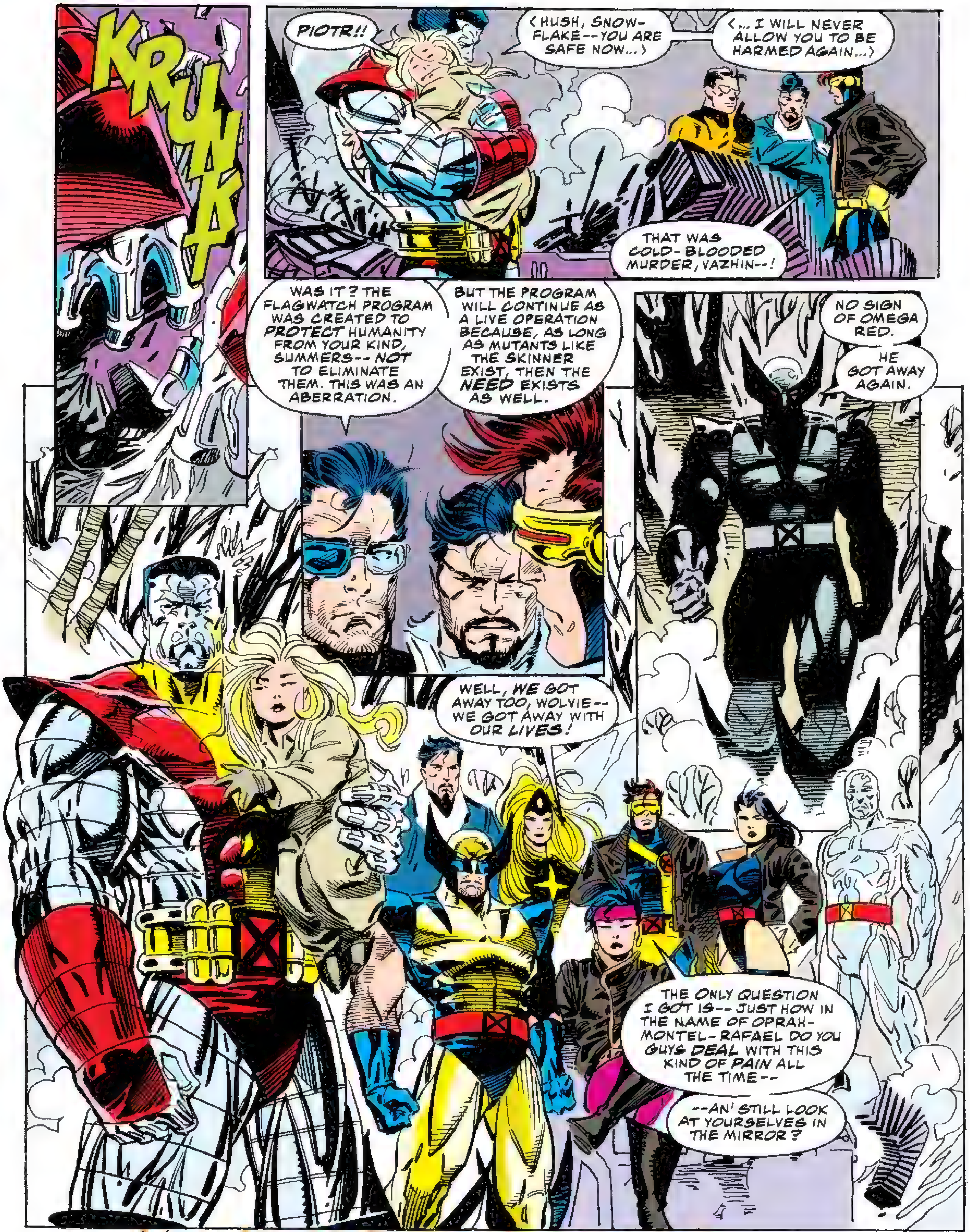
<--BUT DO NOT LIE TO YOURSELF!!>
<BEFORE YOU LEARNED OF YOUR PARENTS' MURDER-->
<--YOU CONSIDERED THE OPTION OF ALLOWING THESE SECURITY PIGS TO USE YOUR SISTER!!>
<I CAN FEEL YOUR GUILT!>
<AND I ONLY ASK YOU TO ASK YOURSELF-- "HOW COULD I"--"HOW COULD I THINK OF WATCHING THIS INNOCENT CHILD DIE--"?!>
<SHE WAS ONLY--ONLY A CHILD-->
<LIE TO ME ALL YOU WANT, TWISTED MUTANT FOOL-->
<LIKE I WAS, RIGHT, FATHER? I WAS ONLY A CHILD, TOO.>
<AND YOU WATCHED ME DIE, FATHER.>
<WHY SO HOLIER-THAN-THOU WITH THE METAL ONE IF HE WANTS TO WATCH HIS SISTER DIE?>
<WOULD THAT NOT MAKE HIM NO BETTER--AND NO WORSE--THAN YOU ARE?>
<NO>
<OSKANA-- I AM--I-->
<WHYYYY>


haff
hugh
< inside your soul-- I see--your guilt overwhelms you-- >
< my guilt--it would appear--overwhelms us all-- >
< SIR? >
< PLEASE DON'T HURT MY BROTHER. >
< NO. I WILL TRY NOT TO, LITTLE SNOWFLAKE-- >
< --I AM TIRED OF INFLICTING PAIN ON OTHERS FOR MY OWN SINS-- >
< --BUT NEITHER AM I WILLING TO ALLOW ALL THESE PEOPLE TO WALK AWAY FROM HERE-- >
< --AND PLAY THEIR TWISTED GAMES OF DECEIT ON OTHERS! >
< BUT, CHILD, I AM AFRAID, THAT IN ORDER TO PREVENT US ALL FROM HURTING EACH OTHER-- >
< --I MUST INSTEAD HURT YOU. >
TCHEK
VVVMMMMMMMMMMM
AYIIIEEEAAA
< HE IS GOING TO KILL US ALL! >
< I CANNOT STOP HIM--I KNOW THAT NOW-- >
< --FOR I HAVE TOO MANY PAINFUL MEMORIES WHICH STAIN MY PAST, TOO MUCH READILY AVAILABLE FOR HIM TO MANIPULATE AND SLANDER! >
< BUT HE CAN BE STOPPED-- >


‹Heaven help me and forgive me for what I am about to do--›
‹--BUT HE CAN-- HE *MUST* BE STOPPED--›
MMMYEEEEE
‹PLEASE, SIR-- please--›
‹--it hurts--›
‹BE BRAVE, ILLYANA-- SOON -- WE WILL ALL BE GONE FROM HERE--›
‹--what--?›
FZASHK
IS IT REALLY THAT MUCH EASIER TO ASK A *CHILD* TO BE BRAVE, SKINNER--
--THEN IT IS TO ASK IT OF *YOURSELF?*
‹--NO MATTER THE GUILT OF THE ACT --OR THE INNOCENCE LOST IN THE CAUSE!›
OR-- SAY IT LOUD, SAY IT PROUD--WOULDN'T IT BE JUST A MOLECULE EASIER--
--TO ASK *US* TO KICK THE *CRUD* OUTTA YOU HERE AN' NOW?

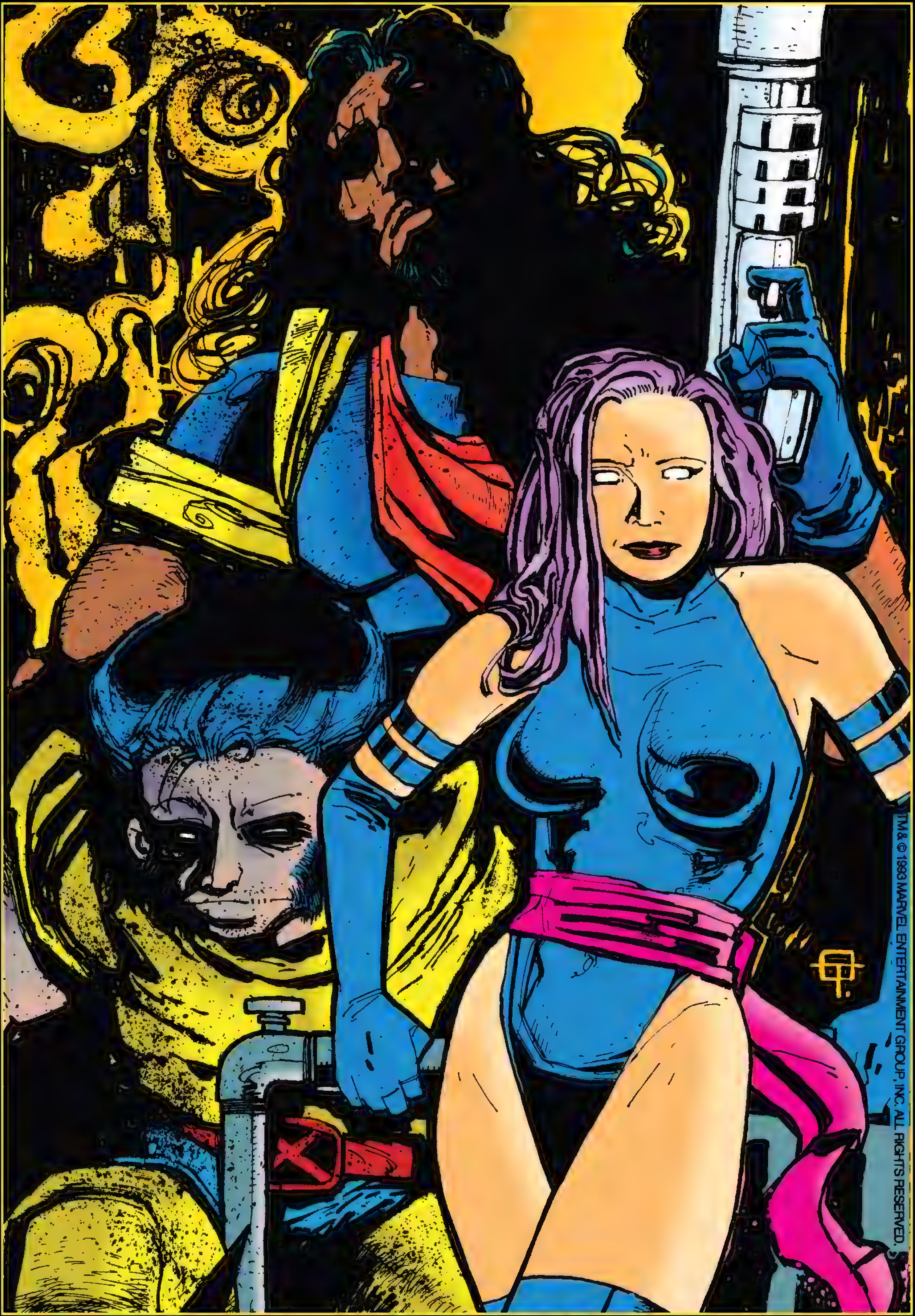
HALF A KILOMETER AWAY...
‹CHILDREN, YOU MUST COME WITH ME.›
‹I NEED YOU--TO COME PLAY--A--GAME--›
"‹--A GAME, I AM SORRY TO SAY--OF LIFE AND DEATH!›"
I'M LYING, GARNOFF--IT'LL TAKE HOURS TO FIGURE OUT THIS SHUT-DOWN SEQUENCE!
THAT'S IT, ILLYANA--BE BRAVE! WE'LL HAVE YOU OUT SOON!
YES, I KNOW. AND IF WE DO IT INCORRECTLY, WE MAY HARM THE GIRL!
CYCLOPS--GARNOFF--STOP!
THE MEANS OF OUR SALVATION LIES NOT WITH ONE CHILD'S LIFE--
--BUT WITH THE MANY!
PSYLOCKE, DO NOT ASK QUESTIONS. JUST DO AS I SAY--THE CHILDREN--AS THEY HOLD HANDS--
--KNIFE ONE OF THEM!
PETER--I--?!?


FSHKKT
I UNDERSTAND-- THE CHILDREN--
--LINKED IN BODY--LINKED THROUGH MY MIND--
--THEIR INNOCENCE--
--COLLECTED THROUGH MY TELEPATHIC BOND--
--AND RELEASED INTO THE SOUL SKINNER!!
YAAARRGHH
BETSY-- WHAT DID YOU DO TO HIM?
IT IS WHAT THE SKINNER DID TO HIMSELF, BOBBY.
HE COULD NOT DENY HIS FEELINGS OF GUILT OVER THE DEATH OF HIS DAUGHTER, BUT HE COULD NOT DEAL WITH THEM, EITHER--
--SO WHEN FLOODED BY THE INNOCENCE OF WHAT HE LOST--HE HAS CHOSEN TO DO NEITHER...
...HE HAS CHOSEN TO SIMPLY TURN HIMSELF OFF AND FORGET THE PAIN.
AN' I NEVER EVEN GOT ONE GOOD SHOT IN!!
KAPOW!
BUT I JUST DID.


KRUNAK
PIOTR!!
‹HUSH, SNOWFLAKE--YOU ARE SAFE NOW...›
‹...I WILL NEVER ALLOW YOU TO BE HARMED AGAIN...›
THAT WAS COLD-BLOODED MURDER, VAZHIN--!
WAS IT? THE FLAGWATCH PROGRAM WAS CREATED TO PROTECT HUMANITY FROM YOUR KIND, SUMMERS--NOT TO ELIMINATE THEM. THIS WAS AN ABERRATION.
BUT THE PROGRAM WILL CONTINUE AS A LIVE OPERATION BECAUSE, AS LONG AS MUTANTS LIKE THE SKINNER EXIST, THEN THE NEED EXISTS AS WELL.
NO SIGN OF OMEGA RED.
HE GOT AWAY AGAIN.
WELL, WE GOT AWAY TOO, WOLVIE--WE GOT AWAY WITH OUR LIVES!
THE ONLY QUESTION I GOT IS--JUST HOW IN THE NAME OF OPRAH-MONTEL-RAFAEL DO YOU GUYS DEAL WITH THIS KIND OF PAIN ALL THE TIME--
--AN' STILL LOOK AT YOURSELVES IN THE MIRROR?

NEXT ISSUE:

WE EXPLORE **JUBILEE'S** QUESTION AS SOME PERSONAL PROBLEMS DEVELOP AMONG THE **X-MEN!**
(EVEN WHEN WE SLOW THINGS DOWN A BIT --
--WE STILL HEAT THINGS UP!)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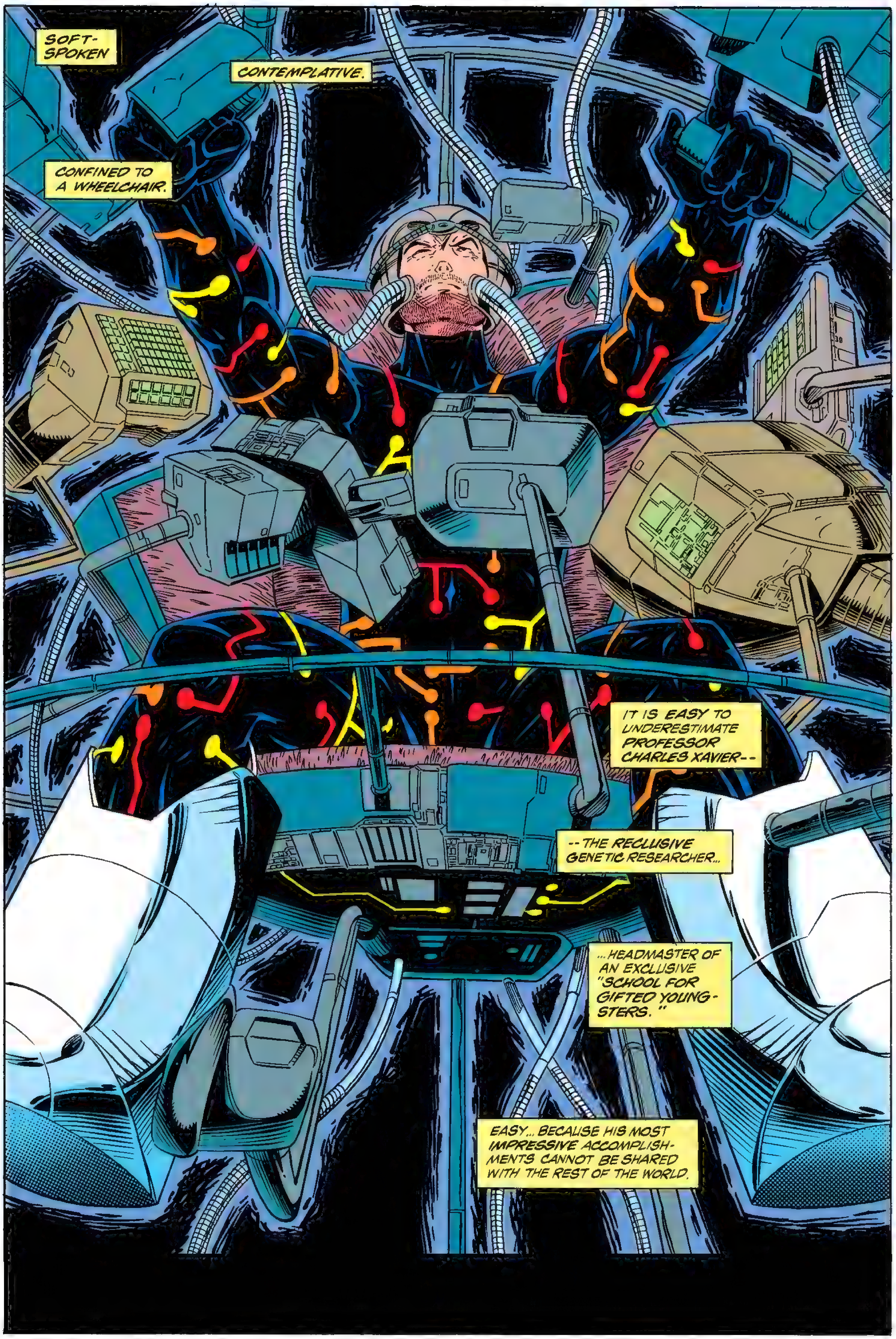
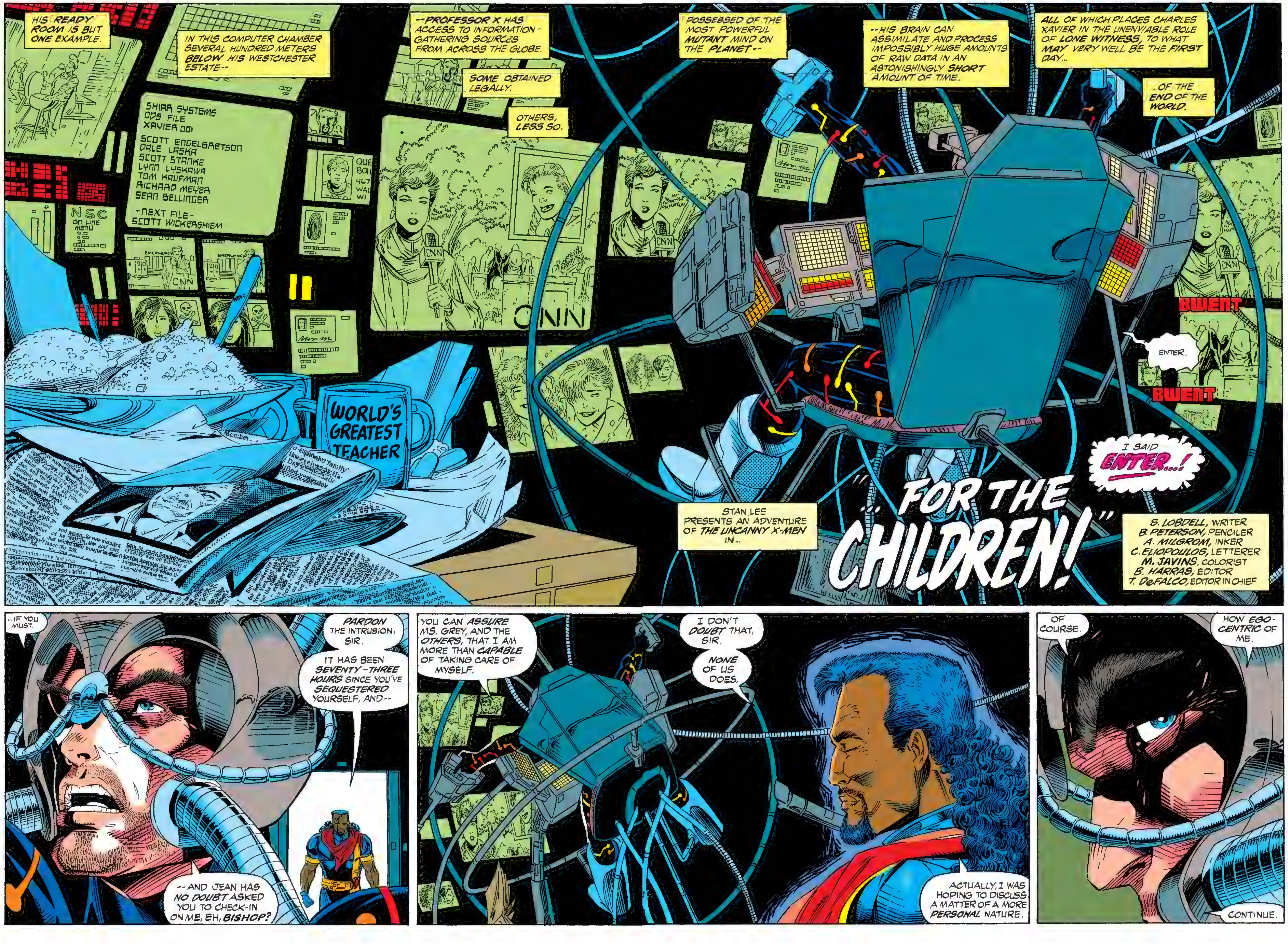
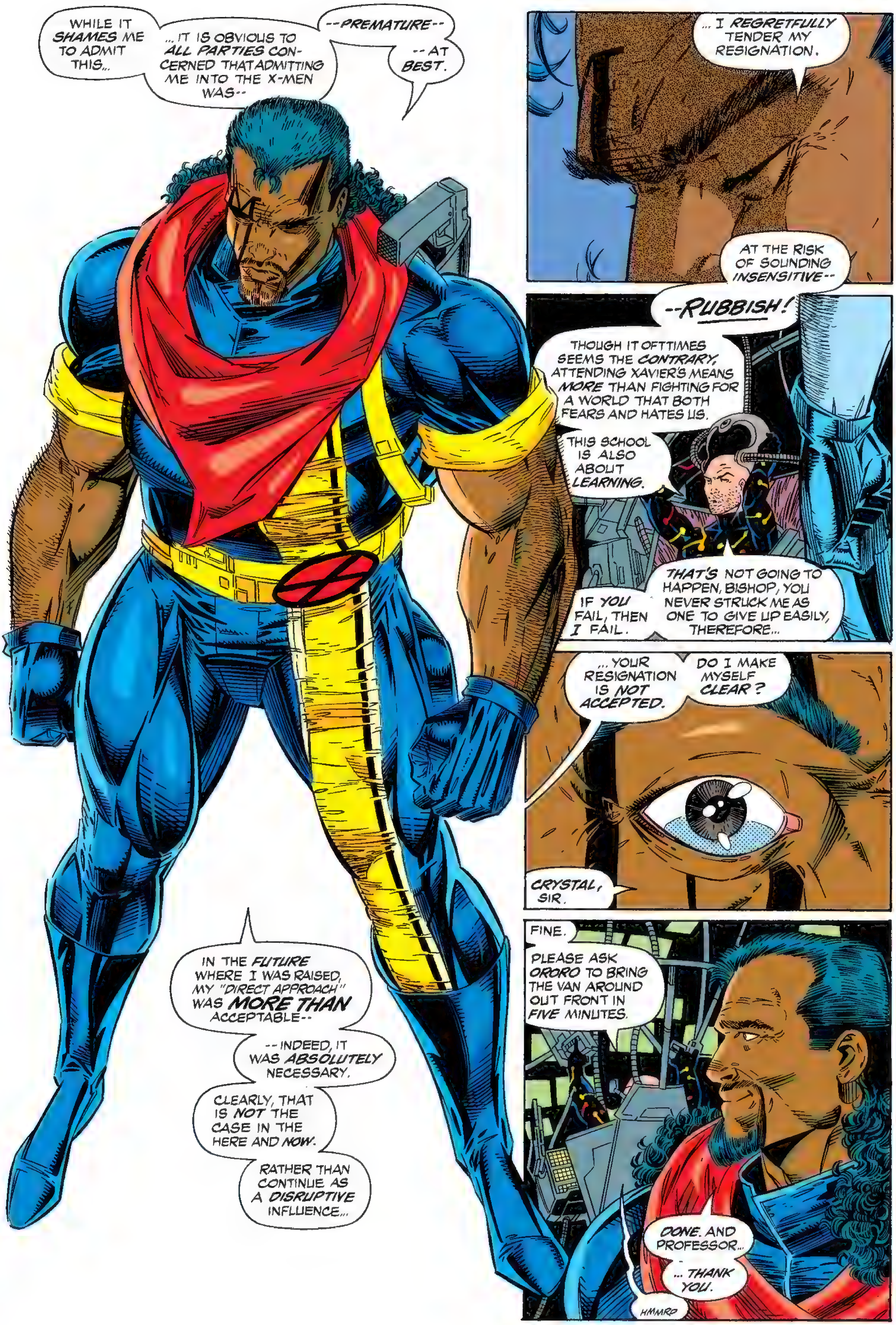
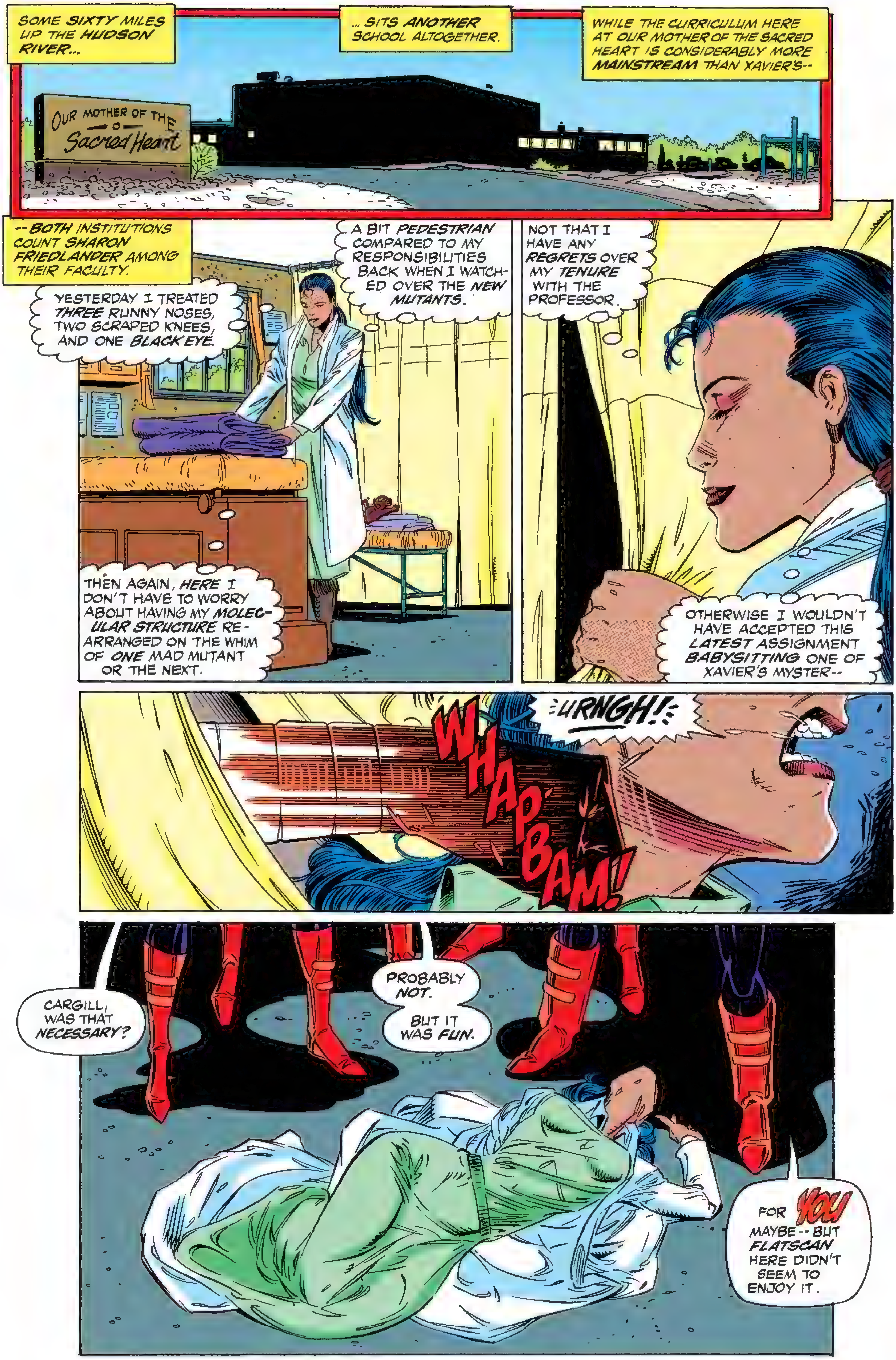
X-MEN POSTER MAGAZINE #2 POSTER BY TED McKEEVER

MARVEL COMICS
©1993 MARVEL ENT GROUP INC
THE UNCANNY
X-MEN
$1.25 US
$1.60 CAN/UK 70p
298
MAR
CC 02461
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
PETERSON
MILGROM
30 YEARS
X-MEN
1963-1993
Acolytes Return!

SOFT-SPOKEN
CONTEMPLATIVE.
CONFINED TO A WHEELCHAIR.
IT IS EASY TO UNDERESTIMATE PROFESSOR CHARLES XAVIER--
--THE RECLUSIVE GENETIC RESEARCHER...
...HEADMASTER OF AN EXCLUSIVE "SCHOOL FOR GIFTED YOUNGSTERS."
EASY... BECAUSE HIS MOST IMPRESSIVE ACCOMPLISHMENTS CANNOT BE SHARED WITH THE REST OF THE WORLD.

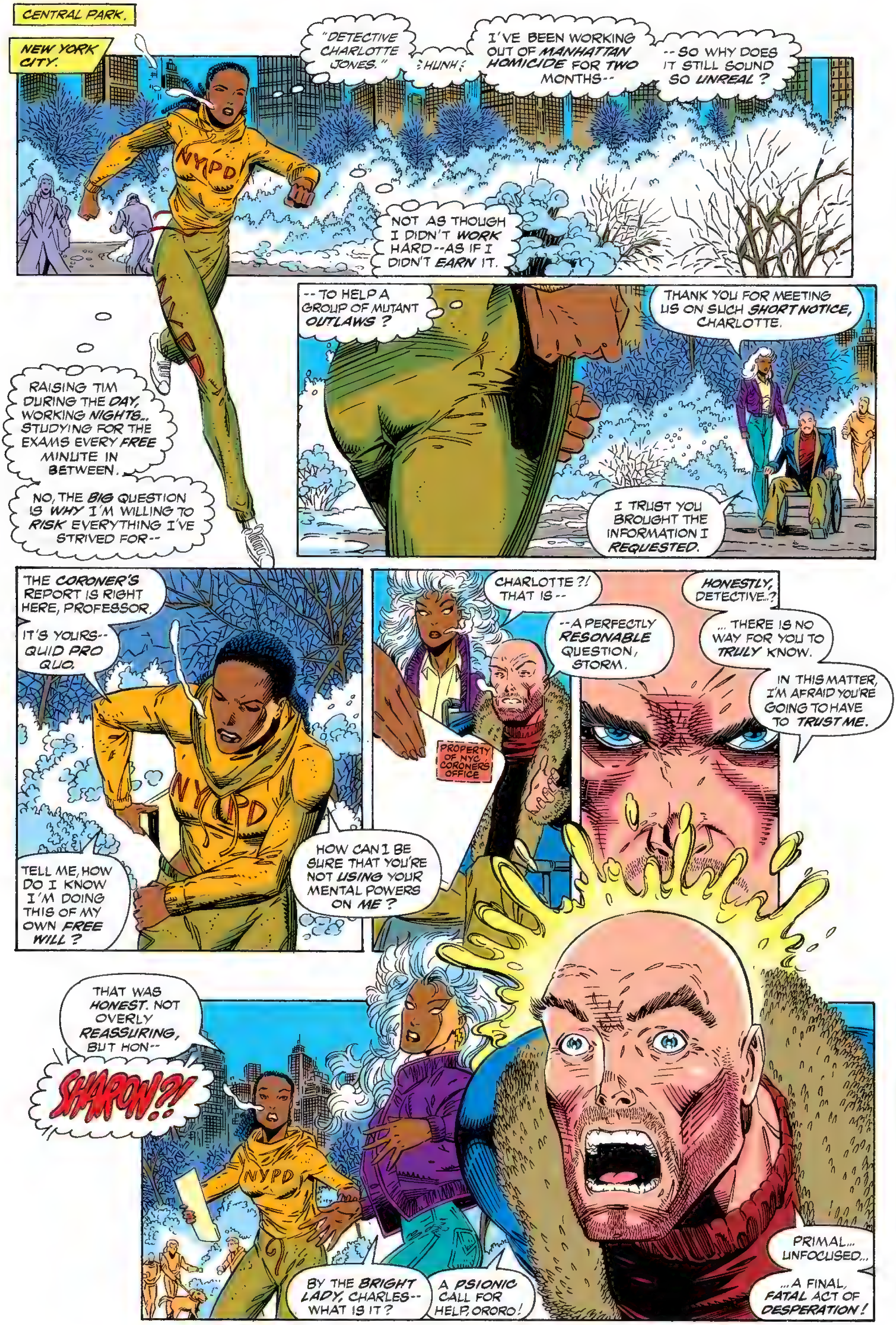

HIS READY ROOM IS BUT ONE EXAMPLE.
IN THIS COMPUTER CHAMBER SEVERAL HUNDRED METERS BELOW HIS WESTCHESTER ESTATE--
SHIAR SYSTEMS
ODS FILE
XAVIER 001
SCOTT ENGELBRETSON
DALE LASKA
SCOTT STANKE
LYNN LYSKAWA
TOM KAUFMAN
RICHARD MEYER
SEAN BELLINGER
-NEXT FILE-
SCOTT WICKERSHIEM
NSC
ON LINE MENU
EMERGENCY
CNN
--PROFESSOR X HAS ACCESS TO INFORMATION-GATHERING SOURCES FROM ACROSS THE GLOBE.
SOME OBTAINED LEGALLY.
OTHERS, LESS SO.
CNN
POSSESSED OF THE MOST POWERFUL MUTANT MIND ON THE PLANET--
--HIS BRAIN CAN ASSIMILATE AND PROCESS IMPOSSIBLY HUGE AMOUNTS OF RAW DATA IN AN ASTONISHINGLY SHORT AMOUNT OF TIME.
ALL OF WHICH PLACES CHARLES XAVIER IN THE UNENVIABLE ROLE OF LONE WITNESS, TO WHAT MAY VERY WELL BE THE FIRST DAY...
...OF THE END OF THE WORLD.
WORLD'S GREATEST TEACHER
BWENT
ENTER.
BWENT
I SAID ENTER...!
STAN LEE PRESENTS AN ADVENTURE OF THE UNCANNY X-MEN IN...
"...FOR THE CHILDREN!"
S. LOBDELL, WRITER
B. PETERSON, PENCILER
A. MILGROM, INKER
C. ELIOPOULOS, LETTERER
M. JAVINS, COLORIST
B. HARRAS, EDITOR
T. DeFALCO, EDITOR IN CHIEF
...IF YOU MUST.
PARDON THE INTRUSION, SIR.
IT HAS BEEN SEVENTY-THREE HOURS SINCE YOU'VE SEQUESTERED YOURSELF, AND--
--AND JEAN HAS NO DOUBT ASKED YOU TO CHECK-IN ON ME, EH, BISHOP?
YOU CAN ASSURE MS. GREY, AND THE OTHERS, THAT I AM MORE THAN CAPABLE OF TAKING CARE OF MYSELF.
I DON'T DOUBT THAT, SIR.
NONE OF US DOES.
ACTUALLY, I WAS HOPING TO DISCUSS A MATTER OF A MORE PERSONAL NATURE.
OF COURSE.
HOW EGO-CENTRIC OF ME.
CONTINUE.

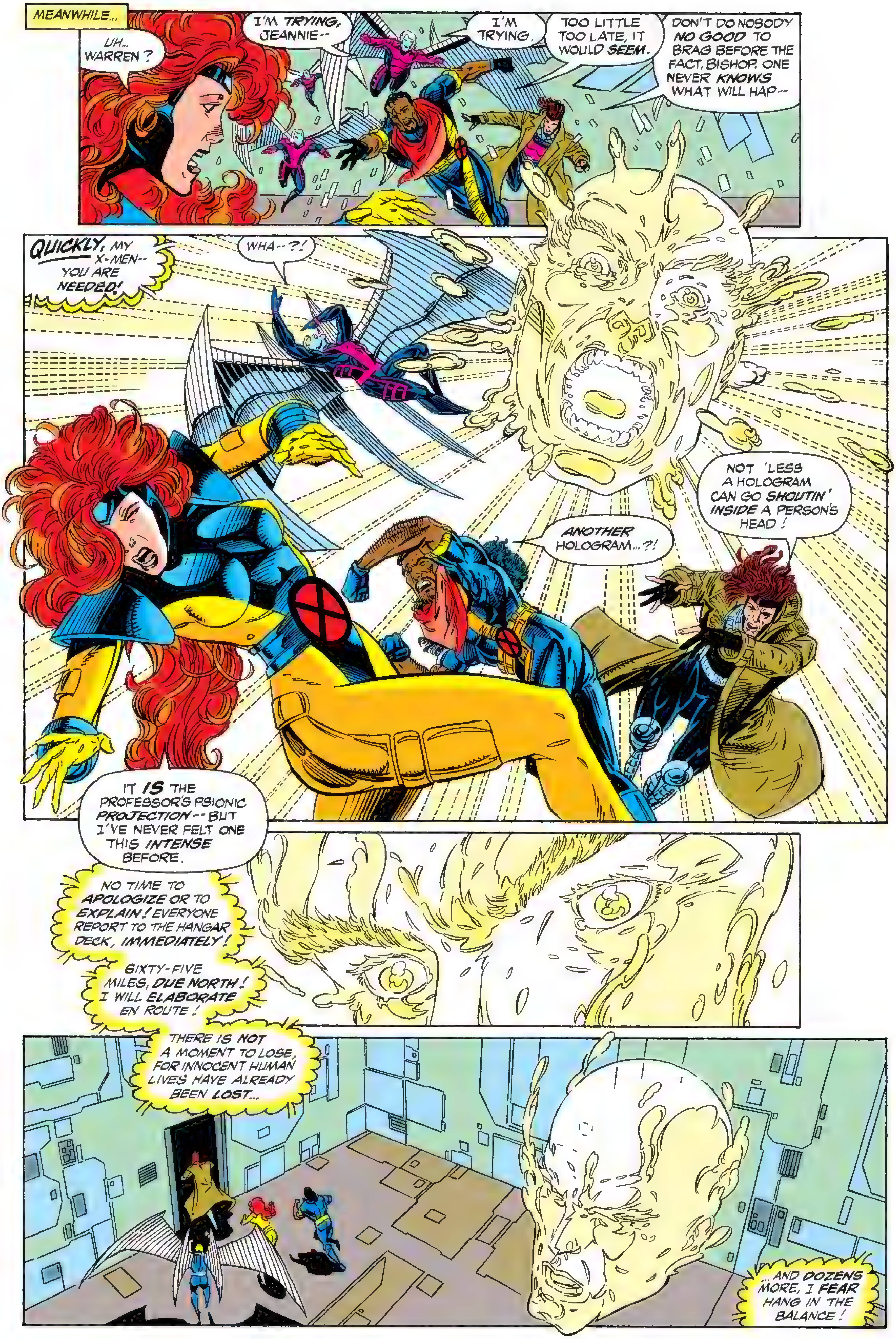

WHILE IT *SHAMES* ME TO ADMIT THIS...
...IT IS OBVIOUS TO *ALL PARTIES* CONCERNED THAT ADMITTING ME INTO THE X-MEN WAS--
--PREMATURE--
--AT *BEST*.
IN THE *FUTURE* WHERE I WAS RAISED, MY "DIRECT APPROACH" WAS ***MORE THAN*** ACCEPTABLE--
--INDEED, IT WAS *ABSOLUTELY* NECESSARY.
CLEARLY, THAT IS *NOT* THE CASE IN THE HERE AND *NOW*.
RATHER THAN CONTINUE AS A *DISRUPTIVE* INFLUENCE...
...I *REGRETFULLY* TENDER MY RESIGNATION.
AT THE RISK OF SOUNDING *INSENSITIVE*--
--RUBBISH!
THOUGH IT OFTTIMES SEEMS THE *CONTRARY*, ATTENDING XAVIER'S MEANS *MORE* THAN FIGHTING FOR A WORLD THAT BOTH FEARS AND HATES US.
THIS SCHOOL IS ALSO ABOUT *LEARNING*.
IF *YOU* FAIL, THEN *I* FAIL.
THAT'S NOT GOING TO HAPPEN, BISHOP, YOU NEVER STRUCK ME AS ONE TO GIVE UP EASILY, THEREFORE...
...YOUR RESIGNATION IS *NOT ACCEPTED*.
DO I MAKE MYSELF CLEAR?
CRYSTAL, SIR.
FINE.
PLEASE ASK *ORORO* TO BRING THE VAN AROUND OUT FRONT IN *FIVE* MINUTES.
DONE. AND PROFESSOR...
...*THANK YOU*.
HMMRP

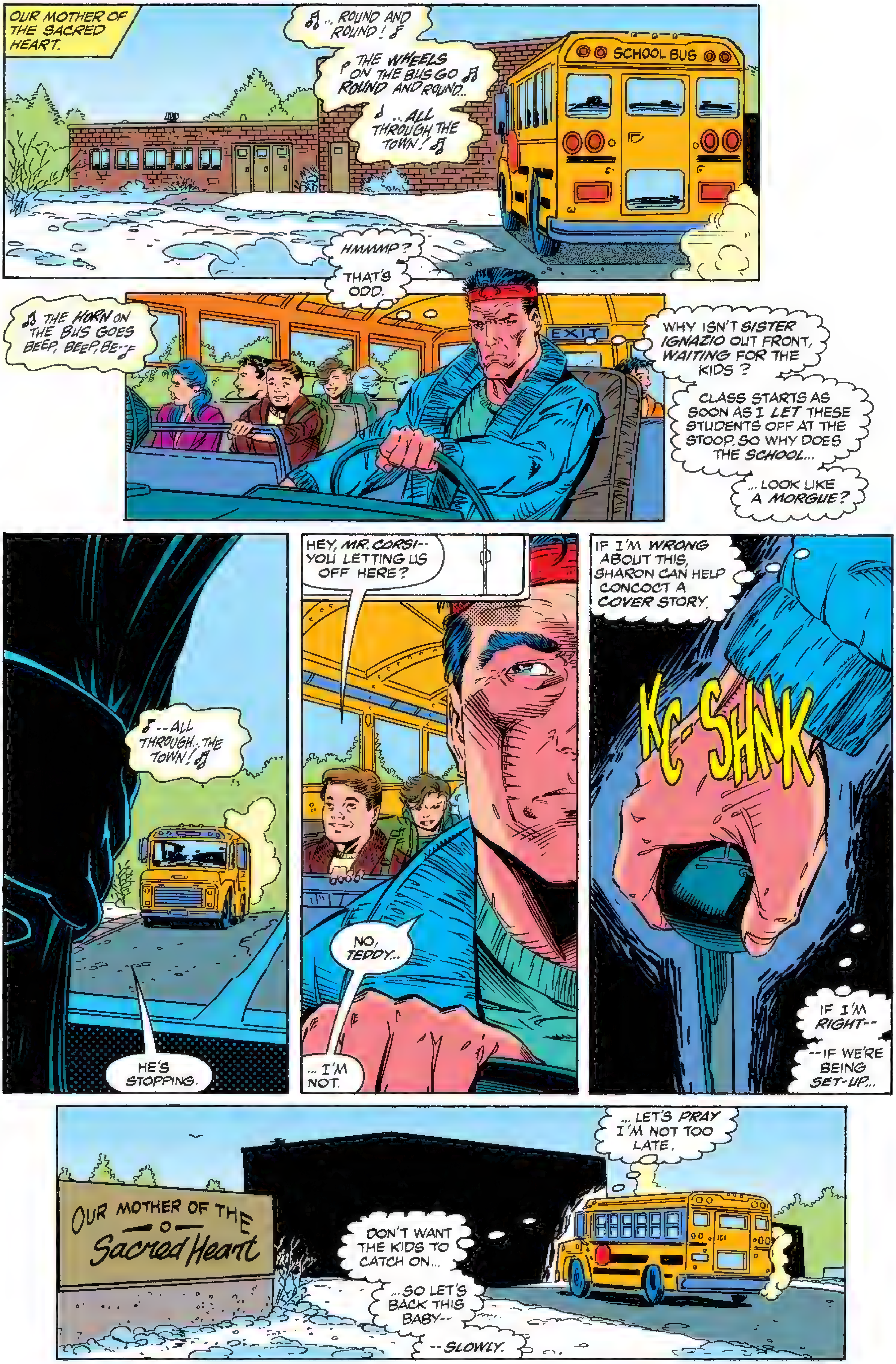

SOME SIXTY MILES UP THE HUDSON RIVER...
... SITS ANOTHER SCHOOL ALTOGETHER.
WHILE THE CURRICULUM HERE AT OUR MOTHER OF THE SACRED HEART IS CONSIDERABLY MORE MAINSTREAM THAN XAVIER'S--
OUR MOTHER OF THE — O — Sacred Heart
--BOTH INSTITUTIONS COUNT SHARON FRIEDLANDER AMONG THEIR FACULTY.
YESTERDAY I TREATED THREE RUNNY NOSES, TWO SCRAPED KNEES, AND ONE BLACK EYE.
A BIT PEDESTRIAN COMPARED TO MY RESPONSIBILITIES BACK WHEN I WATCHED OVER THE NEW MUTANTS.
THEN AGAIN, HERE I DON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT HAVING MY MOLECULAR STRUCTURE REARRANGED ON THE WHIM OF ONE MAD MUTANT OR THE NEXT.
NOT THAT I HAVE ANY REGRETS OVER MY TENURE WITH THE PROFESSOR.
OTHERWISE I WOULDN'T HAVE ACCEPTED THIS LATEST ASSIGNMENT BABYSITTING ONE OF XAVIER'S MYSTER--
WHAPBAM!
URNGH!
CARGILL, WAS THAT NECESSARY?
PROBABLY NOT.
BUT IT WAS FUN.
FOR YOU MAYBE--BUT FLATSCAN HERE DIDN'T SEEM TO ENJOY IT.

XAVIER'S...
GOOD MORNING, CLASS.
WELCOME TO DANGER ROOM 101.
AS YOU KNOW FROM YOUR SYLLABUS, THE OBJECT OF THIS COURSE IS TO KEEP YOU ALIVE--
--USING YOUR MUTANT POWERS WHEN YOU CAN...
...SURVIVING WITHOUT THEM WHEN YOU CAN'T.
WITH STORM AND CYCLOPS BOTH OFF CAMPUS--YOU'RE REALLY GETTING INTO THIS SUBSTITUTE INSTRUCTOR ROLE, JEAN.
YES, WARREN-- I AM.
NOW, SHUSH.
BISHOP AND GAMBIT--IF YOU'LL PLEASE LOSE YOUR WEAPONS...?
IT'S ALWAYS BEEN MY BELIEF THAT A SOLDIER SHOULD NEVER DIVEST HIMSELF OF THE SECURITY OF HIS ARMAMENTS.
MON DIEU! DOES THE MAN SLEEP WITH A TEDDY BEAR AS WELL?
I HEARD THAT, GAMBIT.
TO KEEP THINGS FAIR, BISHOP-- I'LL REFRAIN FROM USING MY TELEKINETIC POWERS DURING THIS EXERCISE.
YOUR ASSIGNMENT IS TO CROSS THE ROOM WITHOUT USE OF YOUR MUTANT POWERS... AND TOUCH ME.
ALL YOU GOT T'DO IS ASK.
SO, WHAT'S THE CATCH?
DON'T NEED NO DANGER ROOM FOR DAT, CHERE.

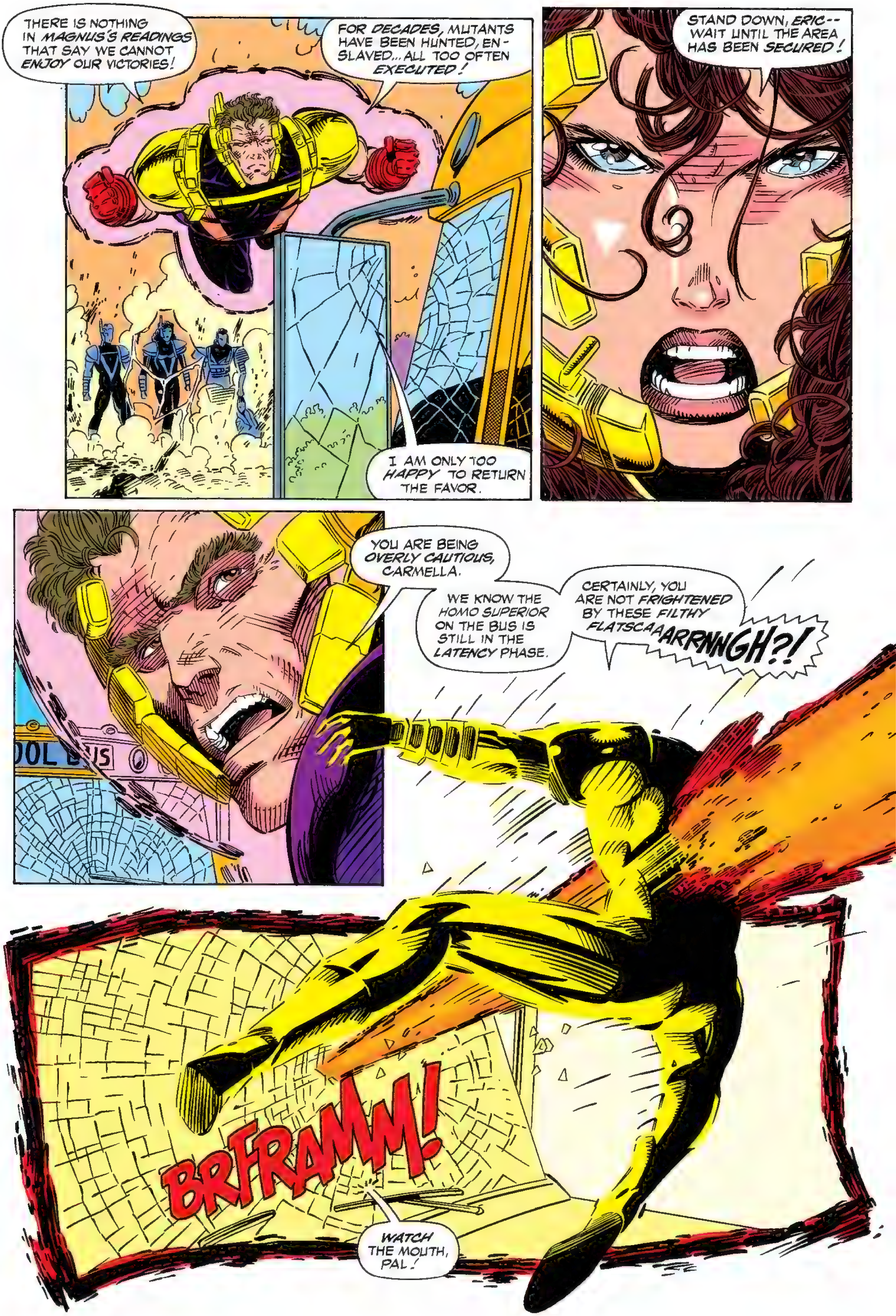
THAT'D BE *ME,* GAMBIT.
BUT *NOT* TO WORRY ABOUT THE ODDS!
COURTESY OF THE *SHI'AR* HOLOGRAM TECHNOLOGY...
...YOU WON'T KNOW *WHICH* ME IS ME--
--AND WHICH IS *NOT!*
YOU REALIZE, *MON AMI*-- THIS IS A THINLY VEILED 'TEMPT AT FORCING YOU 'N ME TO *MAKE NICE?*
ARE YOU CASTING ASPERSIONS UPON *MY* PROFESSIONALISM, *LEBEAU?*
DE *NAME* IS GAMBIT, *HOMMES.*
AND *YES.*
I MAY NOT *LIKE* YOU ANY MORE THAN I CAN *TRUST* YOU --
-- BUT YOU *ARE* NONETHELESS AN X-MAN.
AS SUCH, I WILL DEFEND YOU AS IF YOU'RE *NOT* THE *HOMICIDAL TRAITOR* TO THE CAUSE THAT I SUSPECT YOU ARE.
AIN'T DAT AS COMF'TING AS ALL GET OUT?
ANNNNND--
--BEGIN!
FOR A BODY WHOSE *REFERENCES* AN' PRIOR *WORK HISTORY* IS SOME *HUNDRED* YEARS IN THE *FUTURE* --
--YOU'RE A *FINE* ONE TO QUESTION ANOTHER BODY'S *LOYALTY!*
TRUE, "MON AMI".
TOO TRUE, *INDEED.*

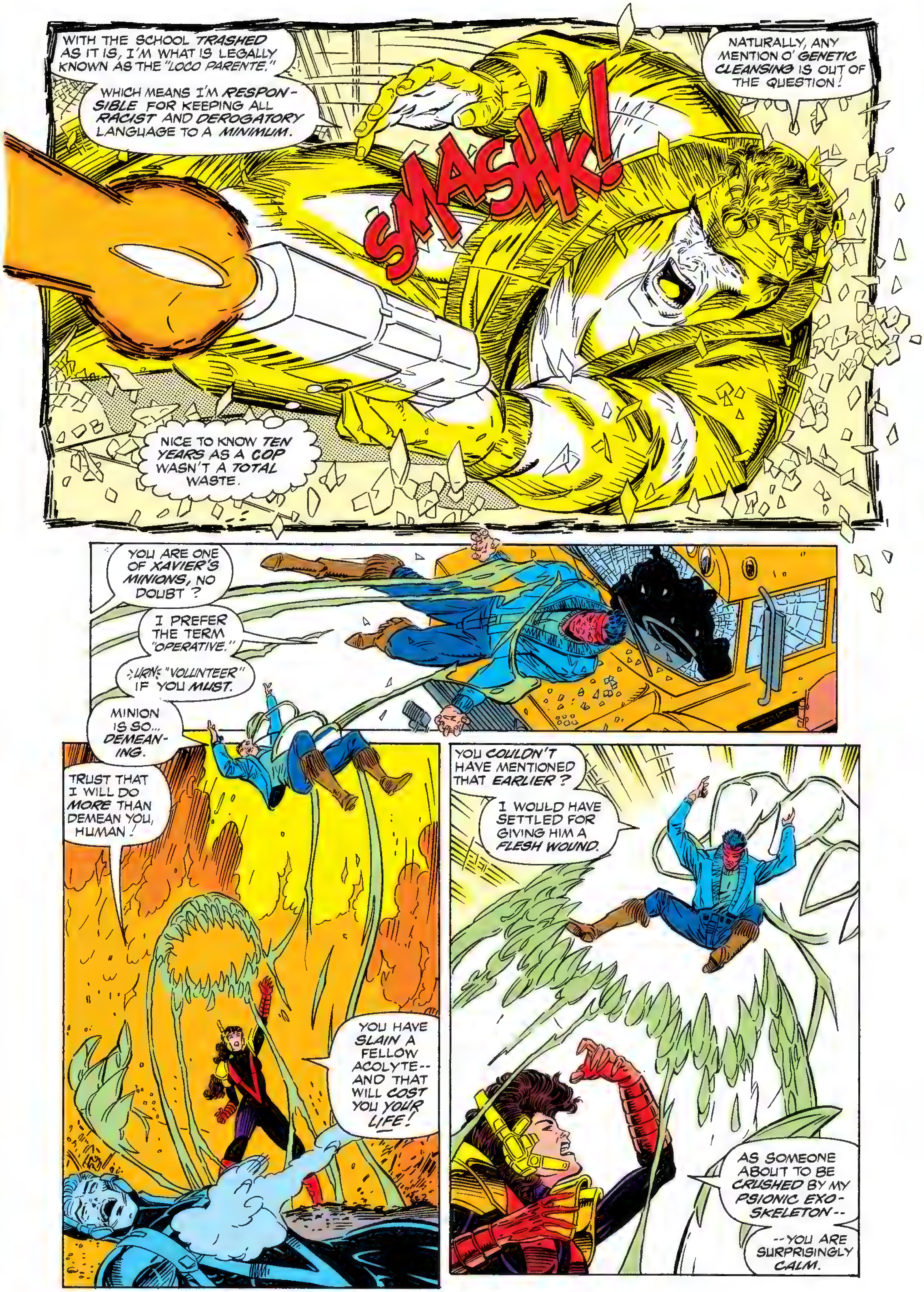

CENTRAL PARK.
NEW YORK CITY.
"DETECTIVE CHARLOTTE JONES."
HUNH
I'VE BEEN WORKING OUT OF MANHATTAN HOMICIDE FOR TWO MONTHS--
--SO WHY DOES IT STILL SOUND SO UNREAL?
NOT AS THOUGH I DIDN'T WORK HARD--AS IF I DIDN'T EARN IT.
RAISING TIM DURING THE DAY, WORKING NIGHTS.. STUDYING FOR THE EXAMS EVERY FREE MINUTE IN BETWEEN.
NO, THE BIG QUESTION IS WHY I'M WILLING TO RISK EVERYTHING I'VE STRIVED FOR--
--TO HELP A GROUP OF MUTANT OUTLAWS?
THANK YOU FOR MEETING US ON SUCH SHORT NOTICE, CHARLOTTE.
I TRUST YOU BROUGHT THE INFORMATION I REQUESTED.
THE CORONER'S REPORT IS RIGHT HERE, PROFESSOR.
IT'S YOURS-- QUID PRO QUO.
TELL ME, HOW DO I KNOW I'M DOING THIS OF MY OWN FREE WILL?
HOW CAN I BE SURE THAT YOU'RE NOT USING YOUR MENTAL POWERS ON ME?
CHARLOTTE?! THAT IS--
--A PERFECTLY RESONABLE QUESTION, STORM.
PROPERTY OF NYC CORONERS OFFICE
HONESTLY, DETECTIVE..?
... THERE IS NO WAY FOR YOU TO TRULY KNOW.
IN THIS MATTER, I'M AFRAID YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE TO TRUST ME.
THAT WAS HONEST. NOT OVERLY REASSURING, BUT HON--
SHARON?!
BY THE BRIGHT LADY, CHARLES-- WHAT IS IT?
A PSIONIC CALL FOR HELP, ORORO!
PRIMAL... UNFOCUSED...
...A FINAL, FATAL ACT OF DESPERATION!


MEANWHILE...
UH... WARREN ?
I'M TRYING, JEANNIE--
I'M TRYING.
TOO LITTLE TOO LATE, IT WOULD SEEM.
DON'T DO NOBODY NO GOOD TO BRAG BEFORE THE FACT, BISHOP. ONE NEVER KNOWS WHAT WILL HAP--
QUICKLY, MY X-MEN-- YOU ARE NEEDED!
WHA--?!
NOT 'LESS A HOLOGRAM CAN GO SHOUTIN' INSIDE A PERSON'S HEAD !
ANOTHER HOLOGRAM...?!
IT IS THE PROFESSOR'S PSIONIC PROJECTION-- BUT I'VE NEVER FELT ONE THIS INTENSE BEFORE.
NO TIME TO APOLOGIZE OR TO EXPLAIN! EVERYONE REPORT TO THE HANGAR DECK, IMMEDIATELY!
SIXTY-FIVE MILES, DUE NORTH! I WILL ELABORATE EN ROUTE !
THERE IS NOT A MOMENT TO LOSE, FOR INNOCENT HUMAN LIVES HAVE ALREADY BEEN LOST...
...AND DOZENS MORE, I FEAR HANG IN THE BALANCE !


OUR MOTHER OF THE SACRED HEART.
♫ ...ROUND AND ROUND! ♫
♪ THE WHEELS ON THE BUS GO ♫ ROUND AND ROUND...
♪ ...ALL THROUGH THE TOWN! ♫
SCHOOL BUS
HMMMP? THAT'S ODD.
♫ THE HORN ON THE BUS GOES BEEP, BEEP, BE--♪
EXIT
WHY ISN'T SISTER IGNAZIO OUT FRONT, WAITING FOR THE KIDS?
CLASS STARTS AS SOON AS I LET THESE STUDENTS OFF AT THE STOOP. SO WHY DOES THE SCHOOL...
...LOOK LIKE A MORGUE?
♪ --ALL THROUGH...THE TOWN! ♫
HE'S STOPPING.
HEY, MR. CORSI-- YOU LETTING US OFF HERE?
NO, TEDDY...
...I'M NOT.
IF I'M WRONG ABOUT THIS, SHARON CAN HELP CONCOCT A COVER STORY.
KC-SHNK
IF I'M RIGHT--
--IF WE'RE BEING SET-UP...
...LET'S PRAY I'M NOT TOO LATE.
OUR MOTHER OF THE Sacred Heart
DON'T WANT THE KIDS TO CATCH ON...
...SO LET'S BACK THIS BABY--
--SLOWLY.

HE NEEDN'T HAVE *WORRIED*.
BSK KABOOM!!
I *TRUST* WE GOT THEIR *ATTENTION*.
AND I TRUST THAT *YOU* ARE AN *IDIOT*, *KLEINSTOCK*!
IF YOU AND YOUR BROTHERS HAVE *JEOPARDIZED* THE *GIFTED* WITH YOUR *RECKLESS* BEHAVIOR--
--YOU WILL ANSWER TO NO LESS THAN *CORTEZ* HIMSELF!
SECURING THE *UNIDENTIFIED* MUTANT IS ONLY *PART* OF THE INQUEST, *UNUSCIONE*.
THERE IS ALSO THE *CLEANSING* OF YOUNG HUMANS FROM THE *GENE POOL*.
SUCH IS OUR *RIGHT*, OUR *RESPONSIBILITY*, AS ACOLYTES--
--AS MAGNETO'S CHOSEN.

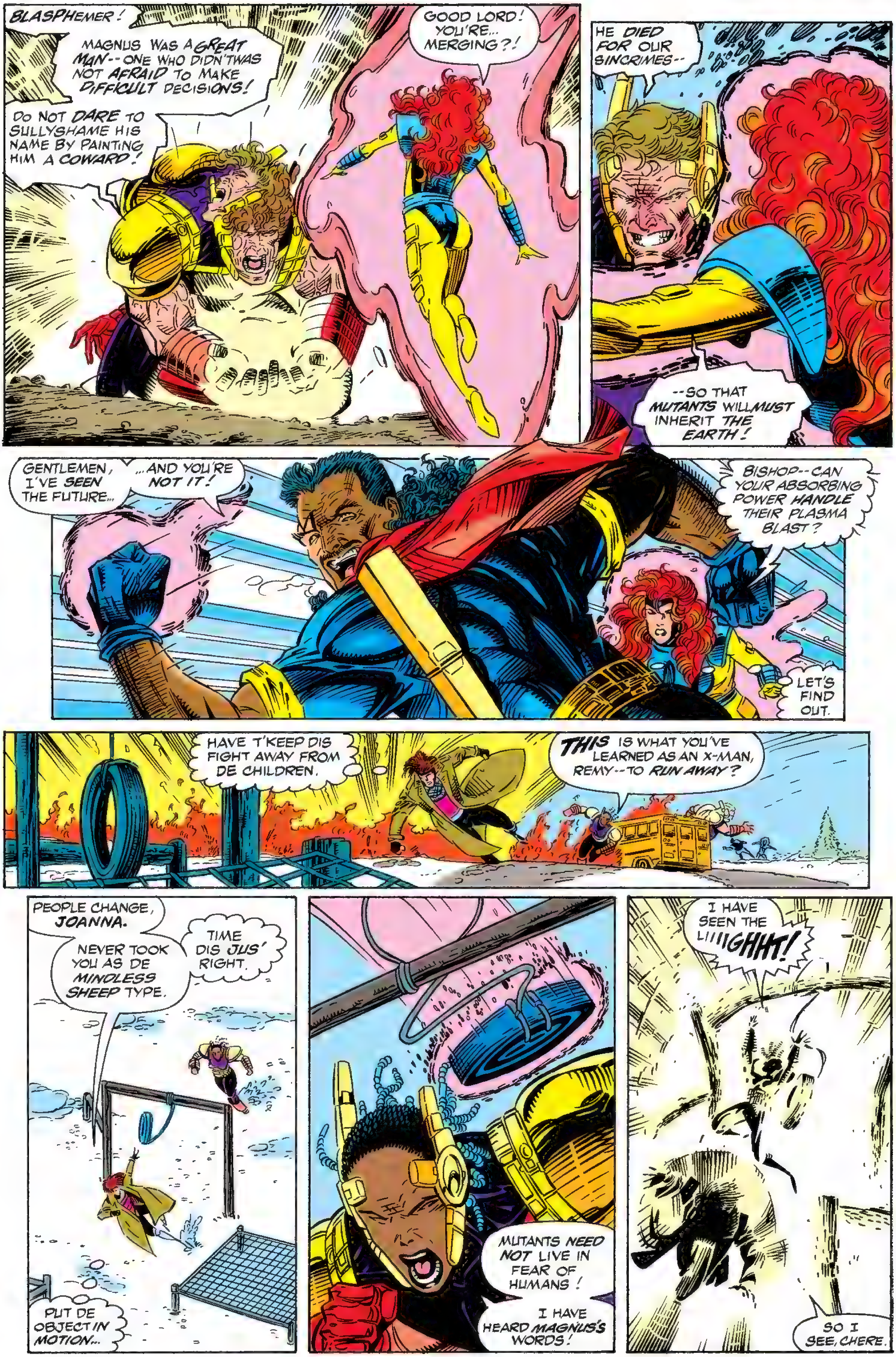

THERE IS NOTHING IN MAGNUS'S READINGS THAT SAY WE CANNOT ENJOY OUR VICTORIES!
FOR DECADES, MUTANTS HAVE BEEN HUNTED, ENSLAVED... ALL TOO OFTEN EXECUTED!
I AM ONLY TOO HAPPY TO RETURN THE FAVOR.
STAND DOWN, ERIC-- WAIT UNTIL THE AREA HAS BEEN SECURED!
YOU ARE BEING OVERLY CAUTIOUS, CARMELLA.
WE KNOW THE HOMO SUPERIOR ON THE BUS IS STILL IN THE LATENCY PHASE.
CERTAINLY, YOU ARE NOT FRIGHTENED BY THESE FILTHY FLATSCAAARRNNGH?!
OOL BUS
BRFRAMM!
WATCH THE MOUTH, PAL!


WITH THE SCHOOL *TRASHED* AS IT IS, I'M WHAT IS LEGALLY KNOWN AS THE "*LOCO PARENTE*."
WHICH MEANS I'M *RESPONSIBLE* FOR KEEPING ALL *RACIST* AND *DEROGATORY* LANGUAGE TO A *MINIMUM*.
SMASHK!
NATURALLY, ANY MENTION O' *GENETIC CLEANSING* IS OUT OF THE QUESTION!
NICE TO KNOW *TEN YEARS* AS A *COP* WASN'T A *TOTAL* WASTE.
YOU ARE ONE OF *XAVIER'S MINIONS*, NO DOUBT?
I PREFER THE TERM "*OPERATIVE*."
URN "VOLUNTEER" IF YOU *MUST*.
MINION IS SO... *DEMEANING*.
TRUST THAT I WILL DO *MORE* THAN DEMEAN YOU, HUMAN!
YOU HAVE *SLAIN* A FELLOW ACOLYTE-- AND THAT WILL *COST* YOU *YOUR LIFE*!
YOU *COULDN'T* HAVE MENTIONED THAT *EARLIER*?
I WOULD HAVE SETTLED FOR GIVING HIM A *FLESH WOUND*.
AS SOMEONE ABOUT TO BE *CRUSHED* BY MY *PSIONIC EXO-SKELETON*--
--YOU ARE SURPRISINGLY *CALM*.

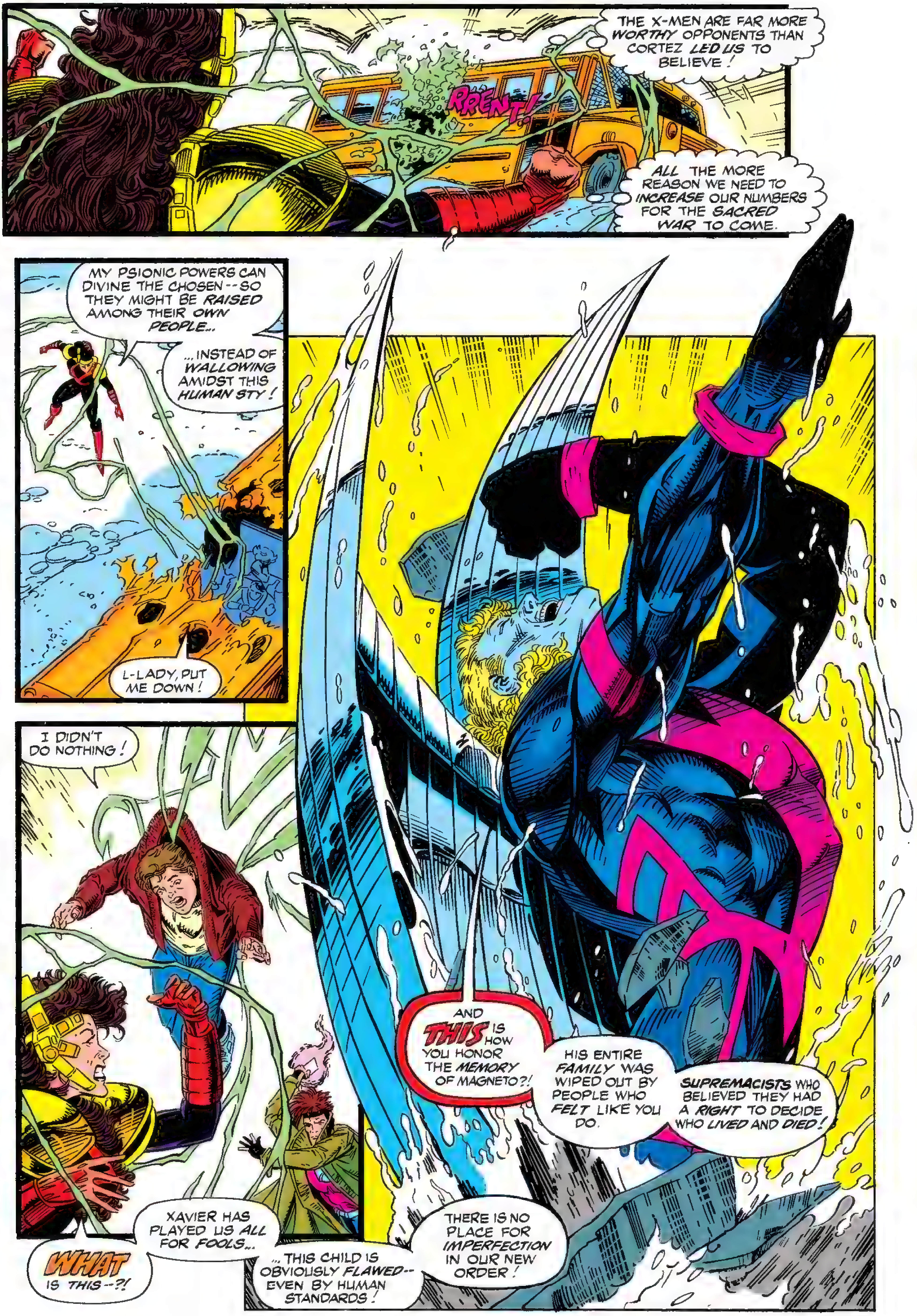
MIGHT BE 'CAUSE DE MAN KNOWS HE'S GOT FRIENDS HE CAN COUNT ON!
KRSM
BRMR
WE HOPED THE ACOLYTES DISBANDED AFTER MAGNETO'S DEATH.*
OBVIOUSLY, THAT WASN'T THE CASE.
*X-MEN #3.--B.H.
BISHOP--Y'KNOW HOW STORM'S ALWAYS SAYIN' DERE ARE TIMES YOU SHOULD MELLOW OUT...
...REIN YOURSELF IN?
WHAT ABOUT IT?
THIS IS NOT ONE OF THOSE TIMES.

HUMAN LOVERS!
IF YOU WERE TRUE MUTANTS, YOU WOULD FOLLOW THE TEACHINGS OF MAGNUS!
YOU WOULD FIGHT AT OUR SIDE TO PURGE THE WORLD OF THE GENETICALLY IMPURE!
IS THAT... FRENZY?
OUGN
URNGH
CHARLES WONDERED WHERE THE ACOLYTES WERE RECRUITING NEW MEM--
EEYAGHH!
CARGILL IS RIGHT. WE SHOULD ALL BE WORKING TOGETHER!
ARE YOU READY, BROTHER?
MORE THAN.
TWINS, EH?
TRIPLETS TILL JUST RECENTLY.
YOU'LL PARDON US IF WE TAKE A MOMENT TO VENT OUR GRIEF?
FWOOSH
JEAN GREY HAS KNOWN WARREN WORTHINGTON III SINCE THE DAY SHE JOINED THE X-MEN.
SHE IS LESS FAMILIAR WITH ARCHANGEL--
--THE MAN HE BECAME AFTER APOCALYPSE'S GENETIC EXPERIMENT.

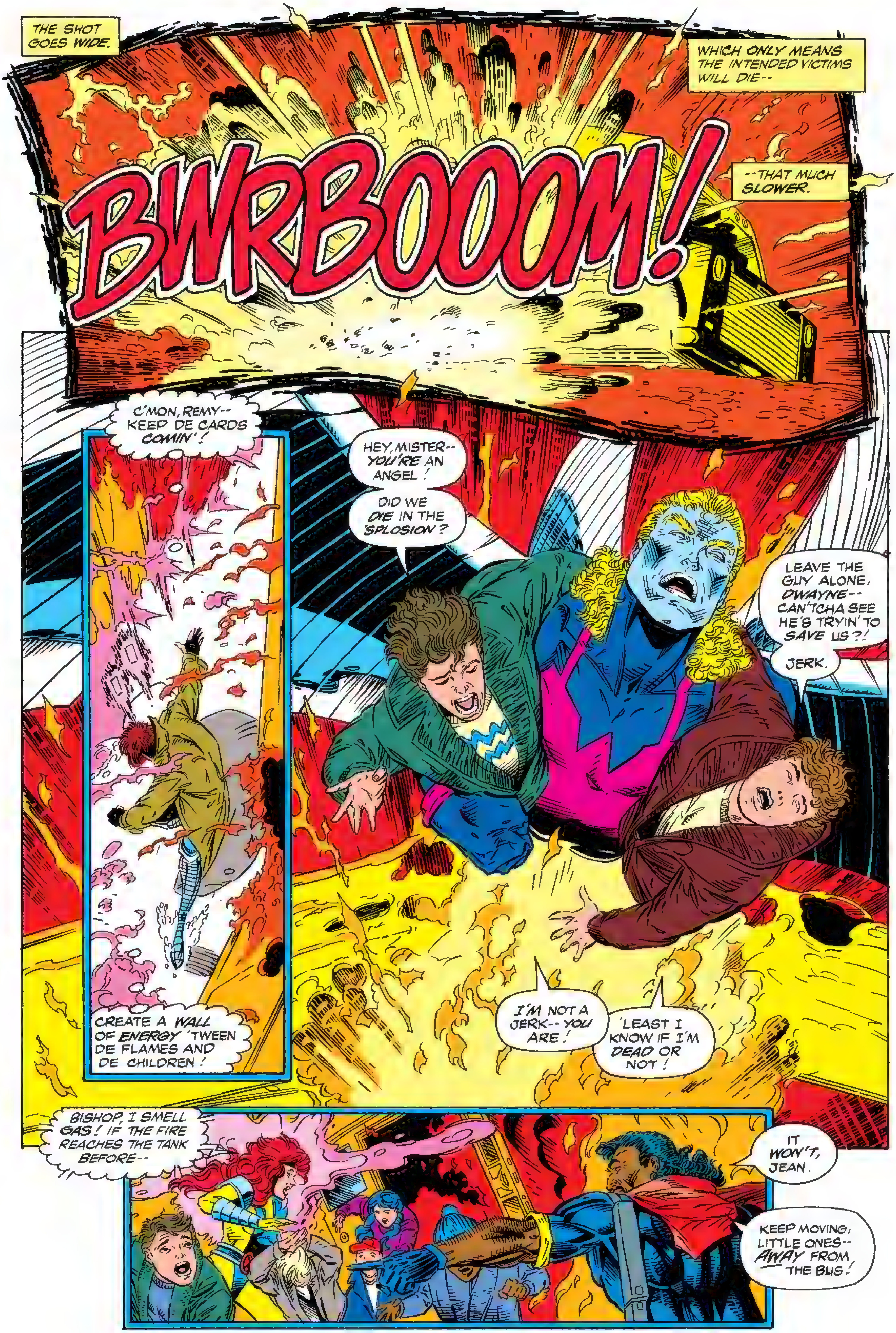
SHE WONDERS IF HIS BODY CAN *WITHSTAND* THE FLAMES.
WARREN?!
SPLOOSH
YOU SEE HOW EASILY YOUR COMRADE HAS *FALLEN*, GREY.
THERE IS STILL A CHANCE TO SAVE *YOURSELF*-- TO *CHANGE* YOUR ALLIANCE.
IF YOU ARE NOT *WITH* US, YOU ARE *AGAINST* US.
MAKE NO MISTAKE, ACOLYTES--
--I AM *MOST* DEFINITELY *AGAINST* YOU!
YEARGH!
SVEN, HARLAN-- SHE'S *DISCORPORATED* MY PSIONIC-SKELETON!
THE MAGNETO *I* KNEW MAY HAVE BEEN *DETERMINED*, EVEN BRUTAL...
...BUT HE WOULD *NEVER* STRIKE OUT AT INNOCENT CHILDREN!
SLAM!



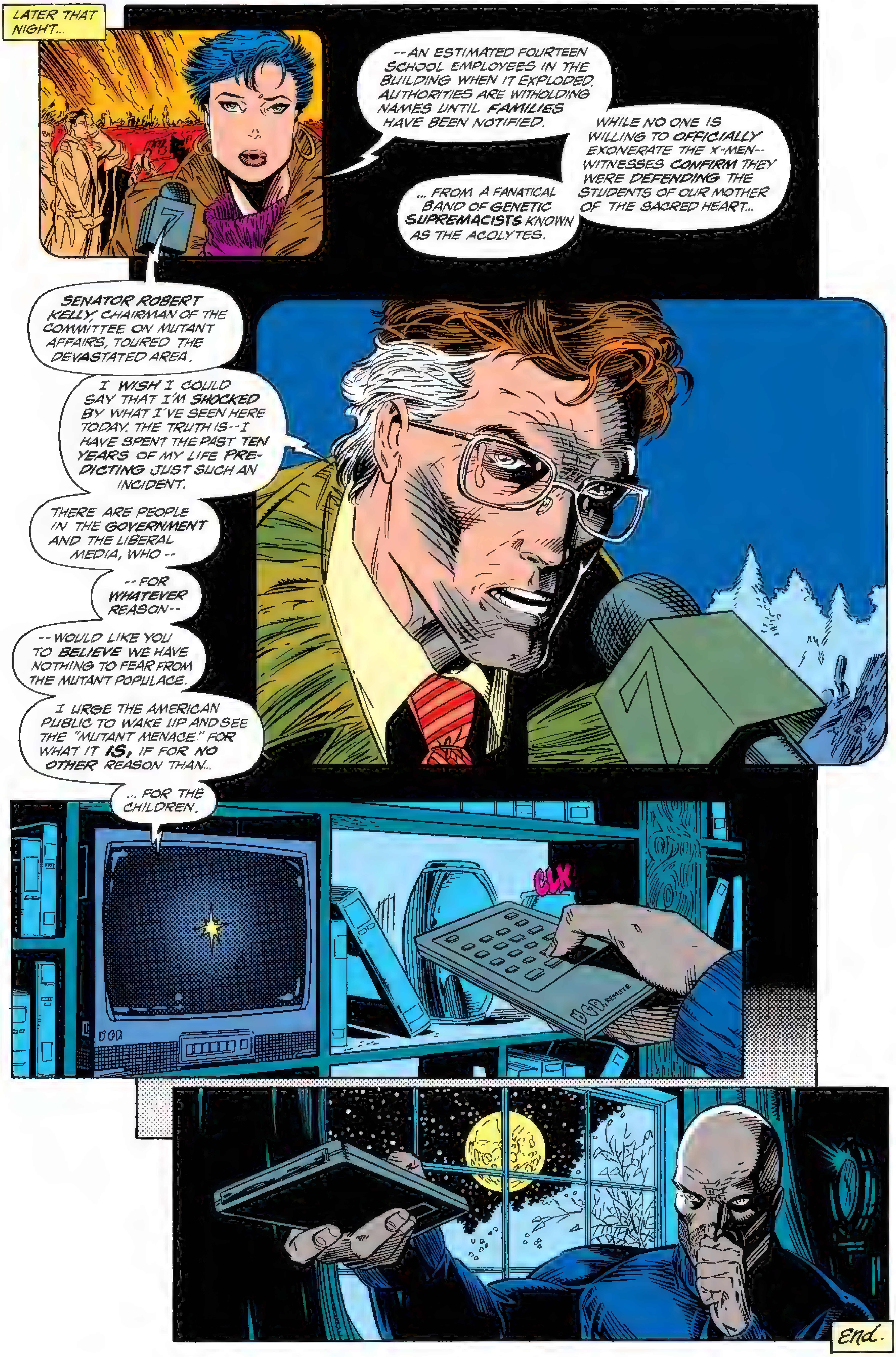
BLASPHEMER!
MAGNUS WAS A GREAT MAN--ONE WHO DIDN'TWAS NOT AFRAID TO MAKE DIFFICULT DECISIONS!
DO NOT DARE TO SULLYSHAME HIS NAME BY PAINTING HIM A COWARD!
GOOD LORD! YOU'RE... MERGING?!
HE DIED FOR OUR SINCRIMES--
--SO THAT MUTANTS WILLMUST INHERIT THE EARTH!
GENTLEMEN, I'VE SEEN THE FUTURE...
...AND YOU'RE NOT IT!
BISHOP--CAN YOUR ABSORBING POWER HANDLE THEIR PLASMA BLAST?
LET'S FIND OUT.
HAVE T'KEEP DIS FIGHT AWAY FROM DE CHILDREN.
THIS IS WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED AS AN X-MAN, REMY--TO RUN AWAY?
PEOPLE CHANGE, JOANNA.
NEVER TOOK YOU AS DE MINDLESS SHEEP TYPE.
TIME DIS JUS' RIGHT.
PUT DE OBJECT IN MOTION...
MUTANTS NEED NOT LIVE IN FEAR OF HUMANS!
I HAVE HEARD MAGNUS'S WORDS!
I HAVE SEEN THE LI!!!IGHHT!
SO I SEE, CHERE.

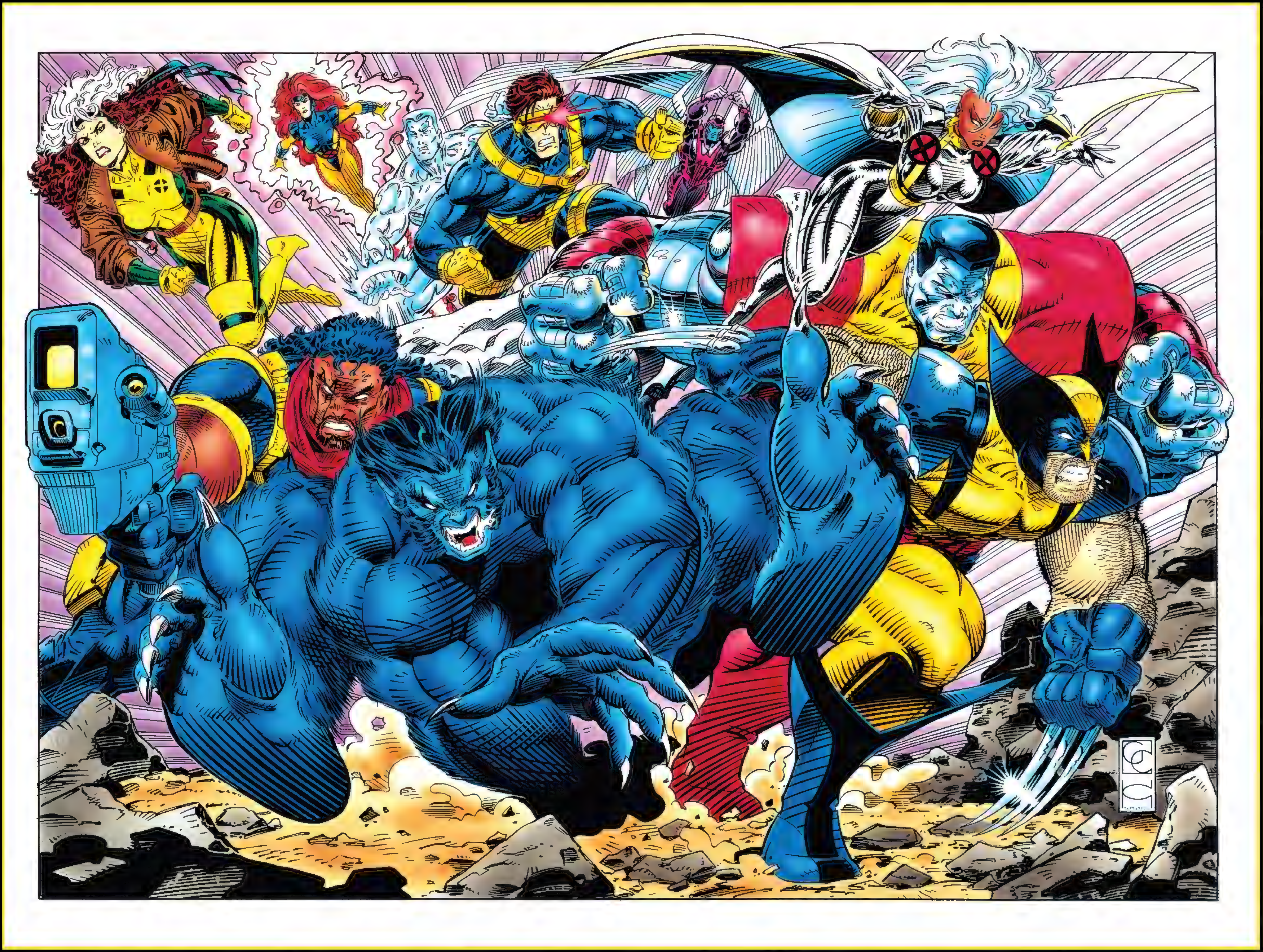

THE X-MEN ARE FAR MORE *WORTHY* OPPONENTS THAN CORTEZ *LED US* TO BELIEVE!
RRENT!
ALL THE MORE REASON WE NEED TO *INCREASE* OUR NUMBERS FOR THE *SACRED WAR* TO COME.
MY PSIONIC POWERS CAN DIVINE THE CHOSEN--SO THEY MIGHT BE *RAISED* AMONG THEIR *OWN* PEOPLE...
...INSTEAD OF *WALLOWING* AMIDST THIS *HUMAN STY*!
L-LADY, PUT ME DOWN!
I DIDN'T DO NOTHING!
AND *THIS* IS HOW YOU HONOR THE *MEMORY* OF MAGNETO?!
HIS ENTIRE *FAMILY* WAS WIPED OUT BY PEOPLE WHO *FELT* LIKE YOU DO.
SUPREMACISTS WHO BELIEVED THEY HAD A *RIGHT* TO DECIDE WHO *LIVED* AND *DIED*!
WHAT IS *THIS*--?!
XAVIER HAS PLAYED US *ALL* FOR *FOOLS*...
...THIS CHILD IS OBVIOUSLY *FLAWED*-- EVEN BY HUMAN STANDARDS!
THERE IS NO PLACE FOR *IMPERFECTION* IN OUR NEW ORDER!

THE CHILD HAS *DOWN'S SYNDROME* ACOLYTE--
--WITH AS MUCH *RIGHT* TO LIVE IN ANYONE'S ORDER AS YOU.
NOTHING *"NEW"* ABOUT IGNORANCE...
...*INTOLERANCE*--
--*HATING* WHAT YOU DON'T *UNDERSTAND.*
SO LONG AS THERE ARE PEOPLE *LIKE* YOU, THERE'LL BE--
-- PEOPLE LIKE *US*...
... WHO'LL BE *THERE* TO *STOP* YOU.
NONSENSE-- THIS CHILD IS AS *USELESS* TO XAVIER...
...AS HE IS TO THE ACOLYTES!
HE BELONGS WITH THE *REST* OF THIS *HUMAN KINDLING!*
KLEINSTOCK-- *"PURIFY"* THEM!
ABOUT TIME!
DO YOU BELIEVE*THINK* WE'VE *ANY*THING TO FEAR FROM YOU AND YOUR GENETIC TURN-COATS?!
NO!
WAM!
DO *THAT,* ACOLYTE--AND I SWEAR BY ALL THAT'S HOLY I WILL HUNT YOU DOWN--AND MAKE YOU PAY IN KIND A THOUSANDFOLD!
FWAZZWAT!


THE SHOT GOES WIDE.
WHICH ONLY MEANS THE INTENDED VICTIMS WILL DIE--
BWRBOOOM!
--THAT MUCH SLOWER.
C'MON, REMY-- KEEP DE CARDS COMIN'!
CREATE A WALL OF ENERGY 'TWEEN DE FLAMES AND DE CHILDREN!
HEY, MISTER-- YOU'RE AN ANGEL!
DID WE DIE IN THE SPLOSION?
LEAVE THE GUY ALONE, DWAYNE-- CAN'TCHA SEE HE'S TRYIN' TO SAVE US?!
JERK.
I'M NOT A JERK-- YOU ARE!
'LEAST I KNOW IF I'M DEAD OR NOT!
BISHOP, I SMELL GAS! IF THE FIRE REACHES THE TANK BEFORE--
IT WON'T, JEAN.
KEEP MOVING, LITTLE ONES-- AWAY FROM THE BUS!

KRA-KA-KA-KA-BOOM!
THE SOUND THAT FILLS THE AIR IS NOT THE EXPLOSION OF THE BUS THEY'D ALL EXPECTED--
--RATHER A CLAP OF THUNDER THAT SIGNALS THE ARRIVAL OF STORM...
...AND THE FIRE-DAMPENING RAINS THAT ARE HERS TO COMMAND!
BY THE BRIGHT LADY!
WHAT MONSTERS ARE THESE THAT WOULD THREATEN THE LIVES OF CHILDREN--
--NO MATTER WHAT THE CAUSE?!
MONSTERS, IT'D SEEM--DAT'VE ESCAPED.
FORT'NATELY, WE SAVED DE CHILDREN.
DID WE, GAMBIT?
OR DID WE SENTENCE THEM--TO A WORLD WHERE NO MAN IS SAFE...
...FROM HIS BROTHER?
IF WE WERE FIGHTIN' DE FIGHT ON OUR OWN...?
DEF'NITELY.
BUT DAT AIN'T DE CASE, STORMY.
NOT BY HALF...


LATER THAT NIGHT...
--AN ESTIMATED FOURTEEN SCHOOL EMPLOYEES IN THE BUILDING WHEN IT EXPLODED. AUTHORITIES ARE WITHOLDING NAMES UNTIL FAMILIES HAVE BEEN NOTIFIED.
WHILE NO ONE IS WILLING TO OFFICIALLY EXONERATE THE X-MEN-- WITNESSES CONFIRM THEY WERE DEFENDING THE STUDENTS OF OUR MOTHER OF THE SACRED HEART...
... FROM A FANATICAL BAND OF GENETIC SUPREMACISTS KNOWN AS THE ACOLYTES.
7
SENATOR ROBERT KELLY, CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE ON MUTANT AFFAIRS, TOURED THE DEVASTATED AREA.
I WISH I COULD SAY THAT I'M SHOCKED BY WHAT I'VE SEEN HERE TODAY. THE TRUTH IS--I HAVE SPENT THE PAST TEN YEARS OF MY LIFE PREDICTING JUST SUCH AN INCIDENT.
THERE ARE PEOPLE IN THE GOVERNMENT AND THE LIBERAL MEDIA, WHO --
--FOR WHATEVER REASON--
--WOULD LIKE YOU TO BELIEVE WE HAVE NOTHING TO FEAR FROM THE MUTANT POPULACE.
I URGE THE AMERICAN PUBLIC TO WAKE UP AND SEE THE "MUTANT MENACE" FOR WHAT IT IS, IF FOR NO OTHER REASON THAN...
7
... FOR THE CHILDREN.
VCR
CLK
VCR REMOTE
End.



X-MEN POSTER BY GREG CAPULLO, HARRY CANDELARIO & TOM SMITH

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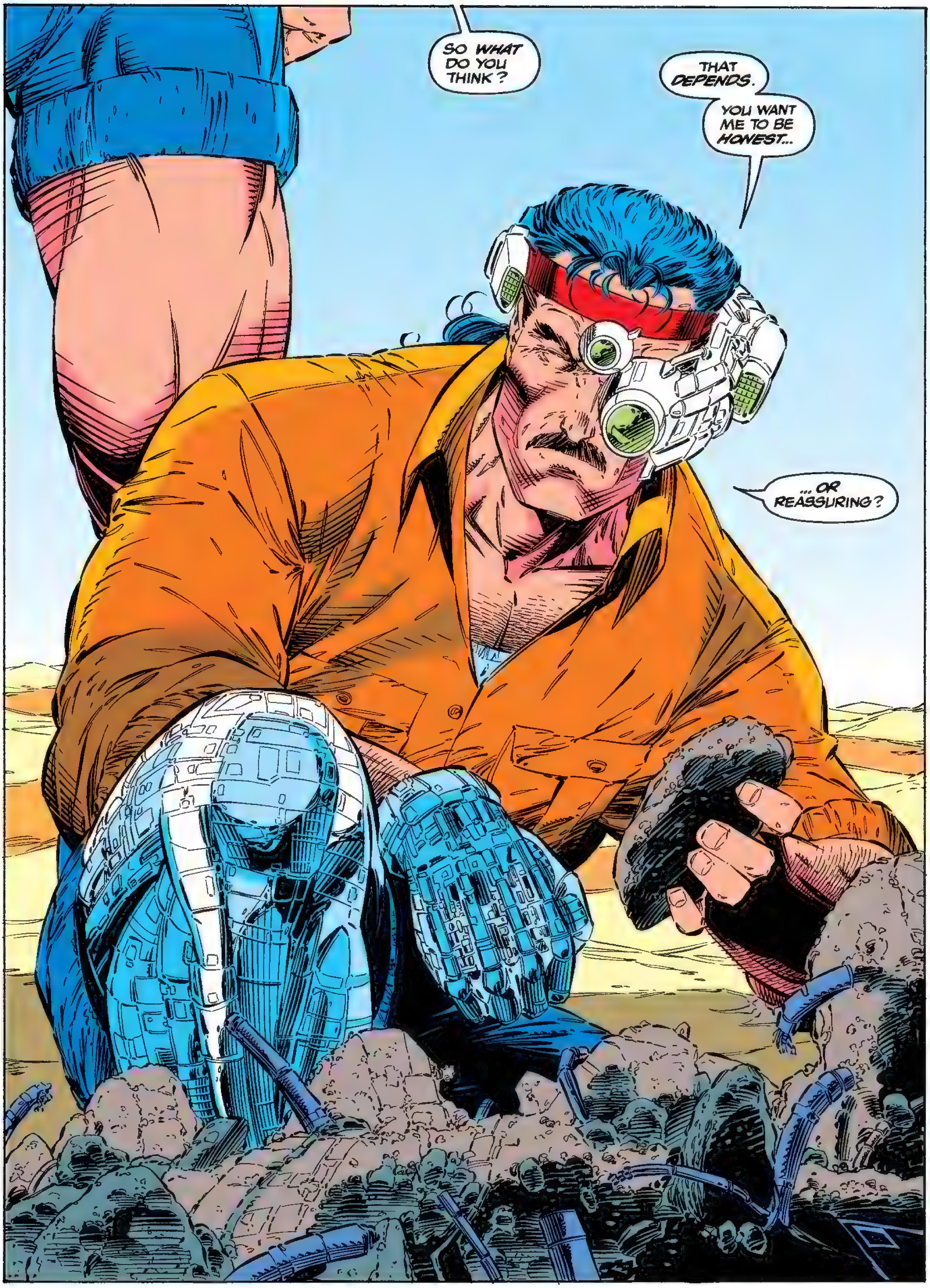
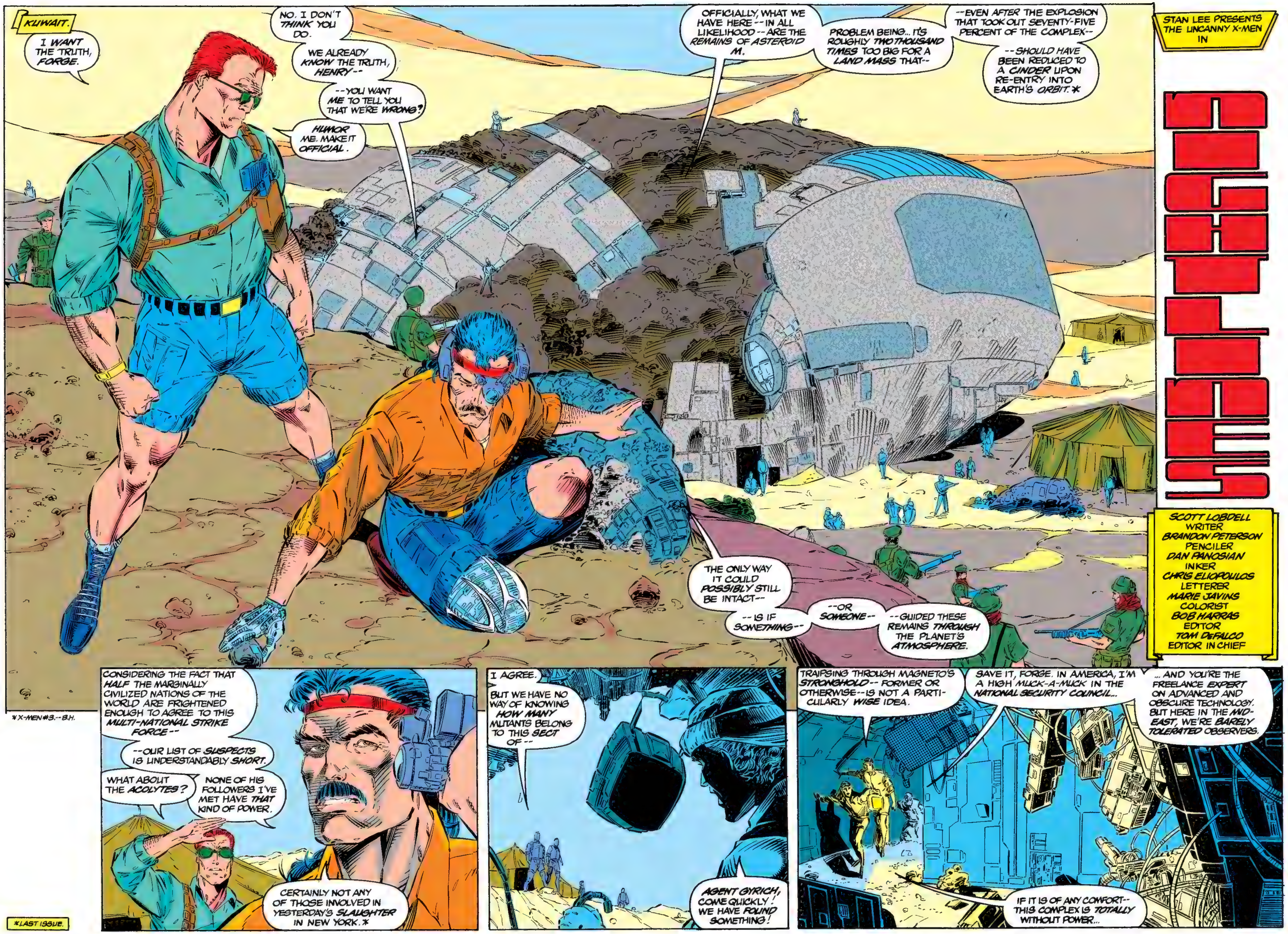
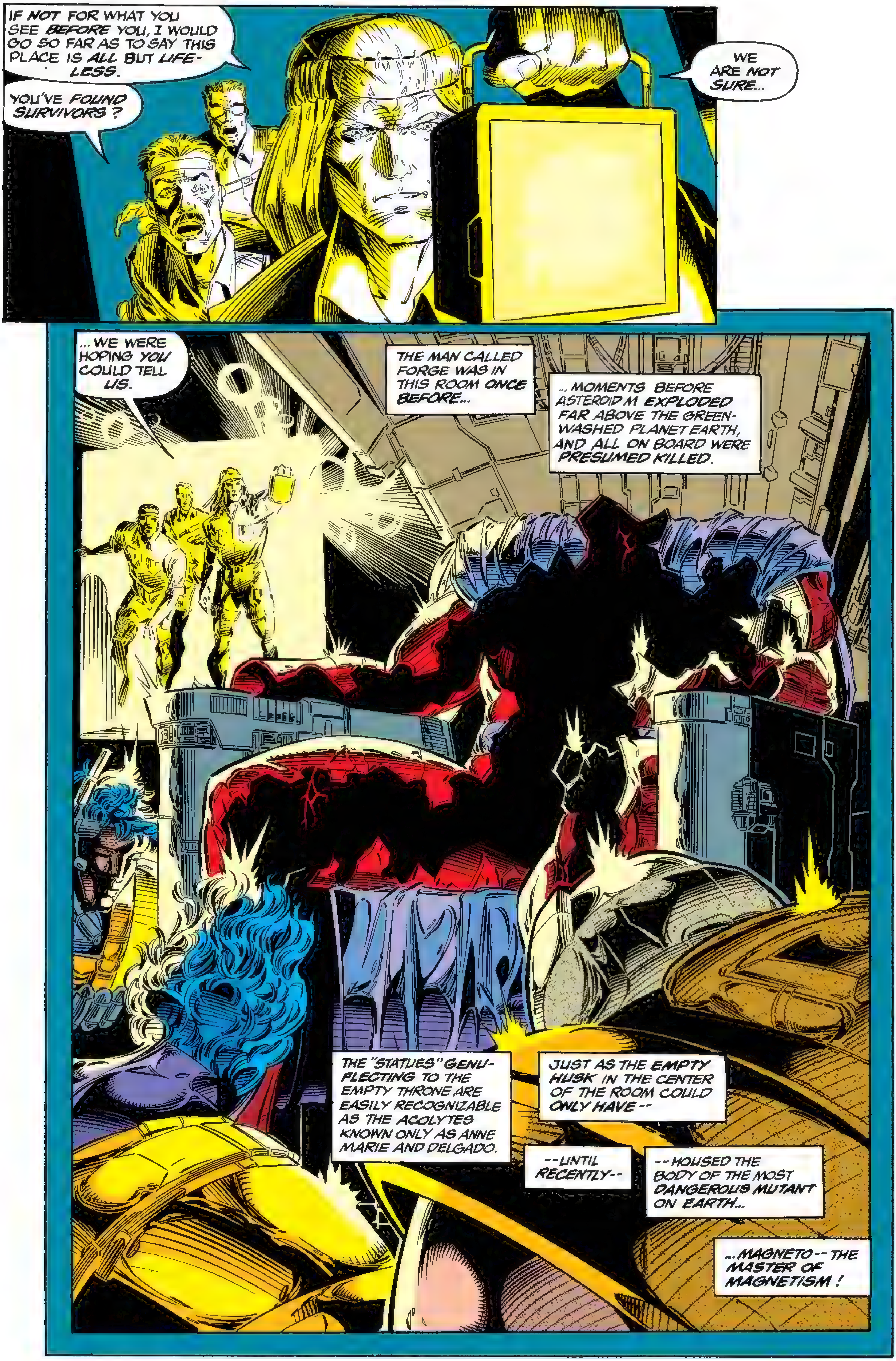
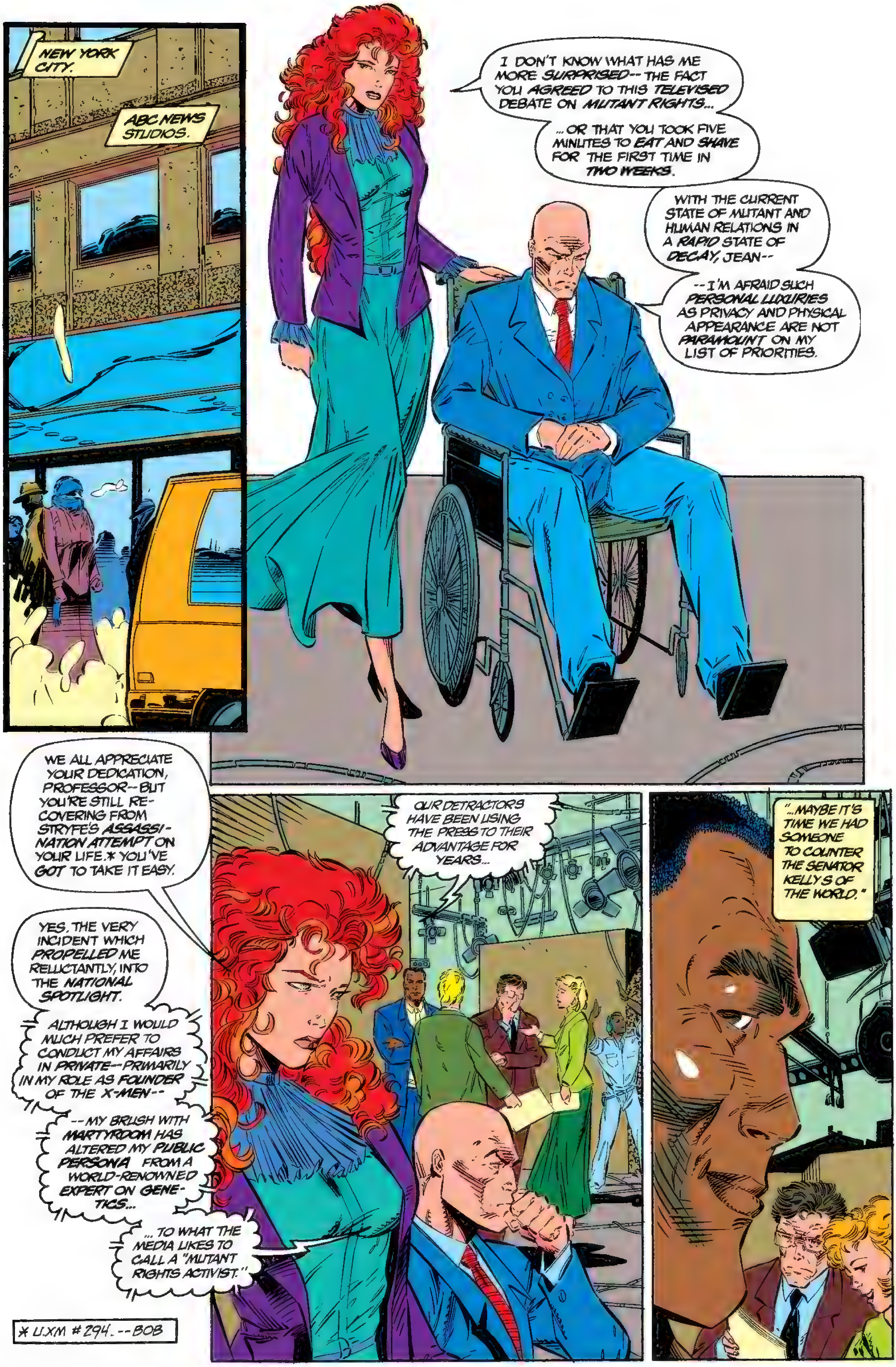
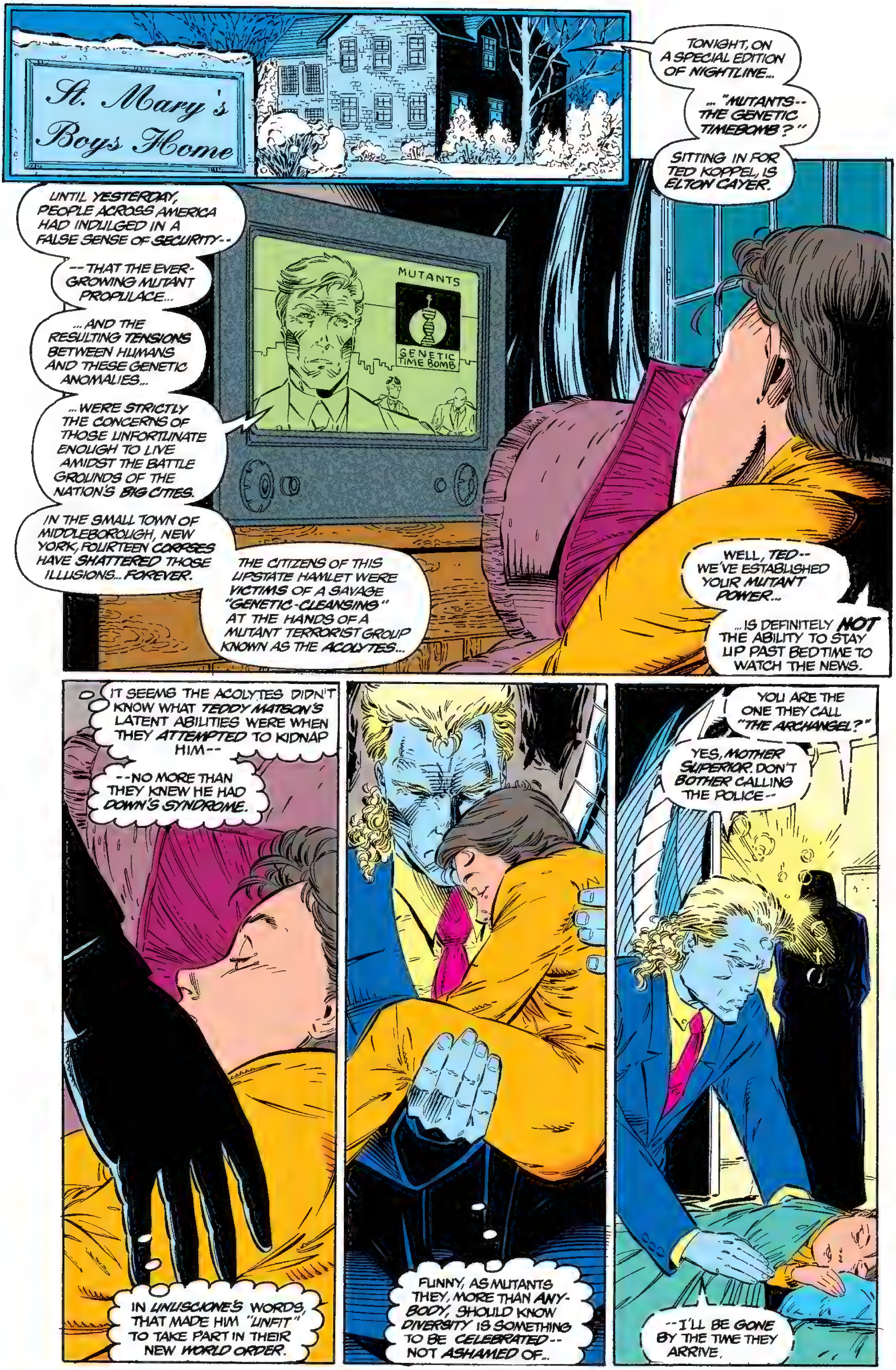

SO *WHAT* DO YOU THINK?
THAT *DEPENDS*.
YOU WANT ME TO BE *HONEST*...
...*OR* REASSURING?

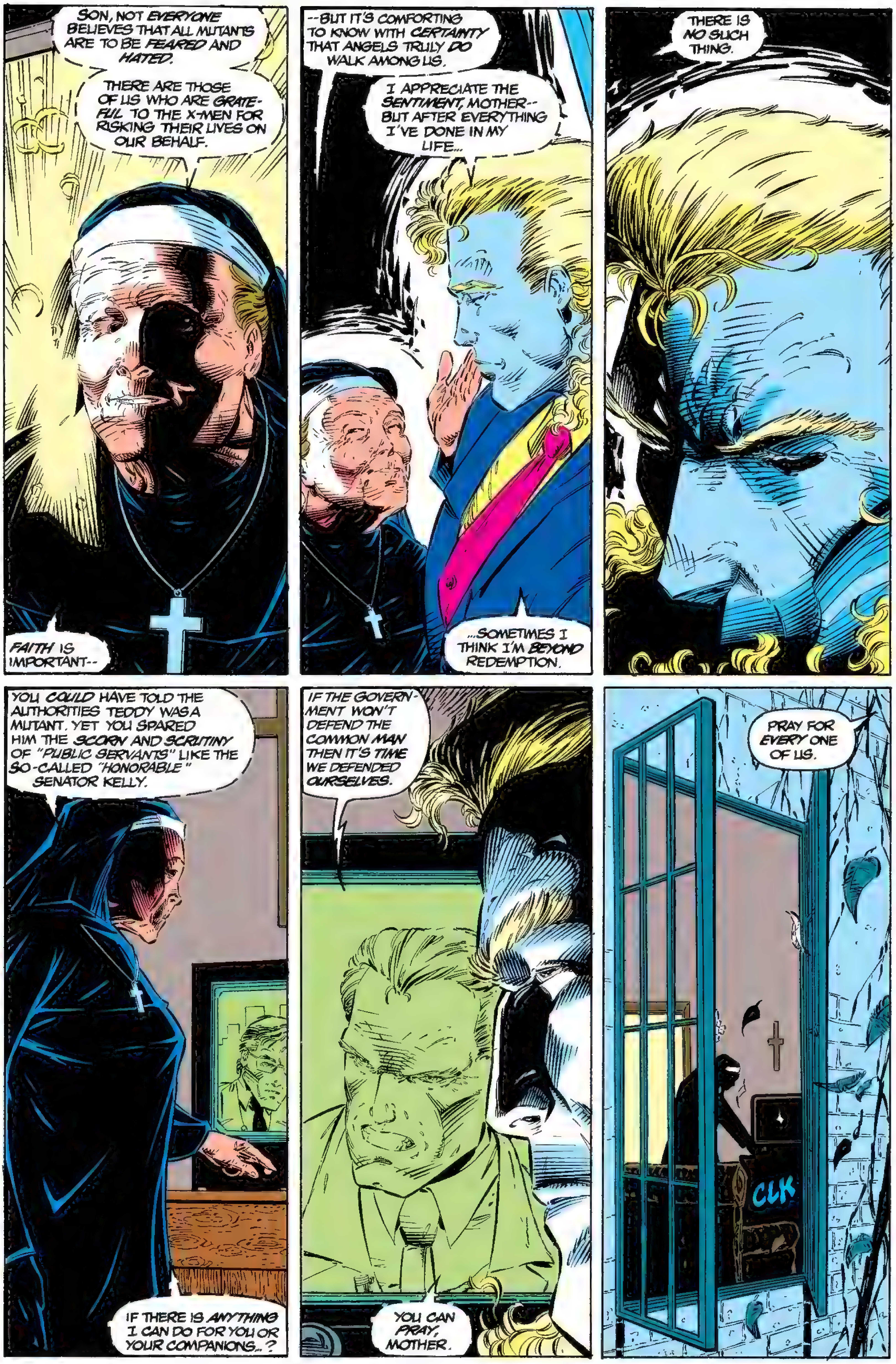

KUWAIT.
I WANT THE TRUTH, FORGE.
NO, I DON'T THINK YOU DO.
WE ALREADY KNOW THE TRUTH, HENRY--
--YOU WANT ME TO TELL YOU THAT WE'RE WRONG?
HUMOR ME. MAKE IT OFFICIAL.
OFFICIALLY, WHAT WE HAVE HERE--IN ALL LIKELIHOOD--ARE THE REMAINS OF ASTEROID M.
PROBLEM BEING... IT'S ROUGHLY TWO THOUSAND TIMES TOO BIG FOR A LAND MASS THAT--
--EVEN AFTER THE EXPLOSION THAT TOOK OUT SEVENTY-FIVE PERCENT OF THE COMPLEX--
--SHOULD HAVE BEEN REDUCED TO A CINDER UPON RE-ENTRY INTO EARTH'S ORBIT.*
STAN LEE PRESENTS THE UNCANNY X-MEN IN
NIGHTLINES
SCOTT LOBDELL WRITER
BRANDON PETERSON PENCILER
DAN PANOSIAN INKER
CHRIS ELIOPOULOS LETTERER
MARIE JAVINS COLORIST
BOB HARRAS EDITOR
TOM DeFALCO EDITOR IN CHIEF
THE ONLY WAY IT COULD POSSIBLY STILL BE INTACT--
--IS IF SOMETHING--
--OR SOMEONE--
--GUIDED THESE REMAINS THROUGH THE PLANET'S ATMOSPHERE.
* X-MEN #3.--B.H.
CONSIDERING THE FACT THAT HALF THE MARGINALLY CIVILIZED NATIONS OF THE WORLD ARE FRIGHTENED ENOUGH TO AGREE TO THIS MULTI-NATIONAL STRIKE FORCE--
--OUR LIST OF SUSPECTS IS UNDERSTANDABLY SHORT.
WHAT ABOUT THE ACOLYTES?
NONE OF HIS FOLLOWERS I'VE MET HAVE THAT KIND OF POWER.
CERTAINLY NOT ANY OF THOSE INVOLVED IN YESTERDAY'S SLAUGHTER IN NEW YORK.*
*LAST ISSUE.
I AGREE.
BUT WE HAVE NO WAY OF KNOWING HOW MANY MUTANTS BELONG TO THIS SECT OF--
AGENT GYRICH, COME QUICKLY! WE HAVE FOUND SOMETHING!
TRAIPSING THROUGH MAGNETO'S STRONGHOLD--FORMER OR OTHERWISE--IS NOT A PARTICULARLY WISE IDEA.
SAVE IT, FORGE. IN AMERICA, I'M A HIGH MUCK-A-MUCK IN THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL...
...AND YOU'RE THE FREELANCE EXPERT ON ADVANCED AND OBSCURE TECHNOLOGY. BUT HERE IN THE MID-EAST, WE'RE BARELY TOLERATED OBSERVERS.
IF IT IS OF ANY COMFORT--THIS COMPLEX IS TOTALLY WITHOUT POWER...

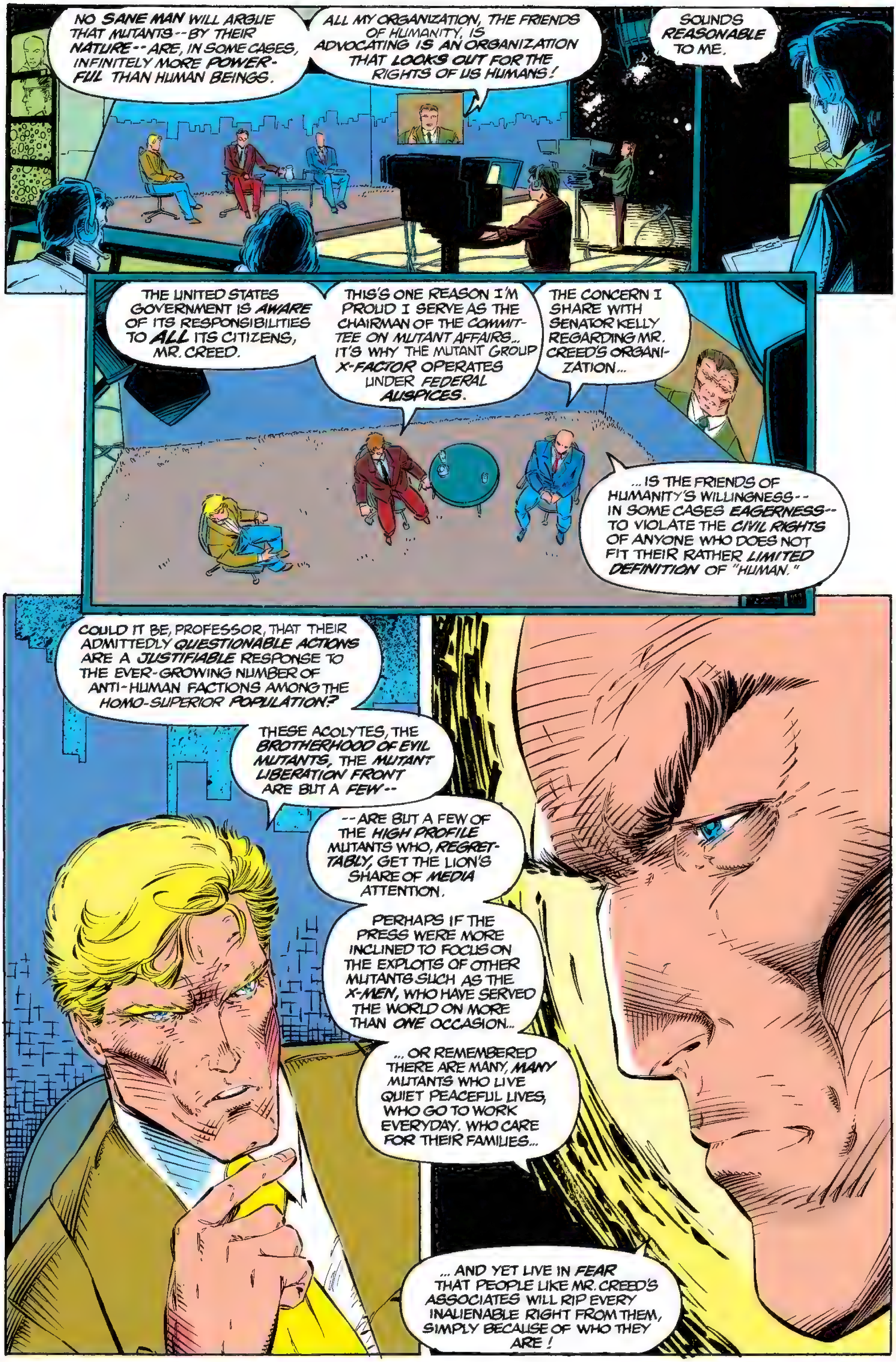

IF NOT FOR WHAT YOU SEE BEFORE YOU, I WOULD GO SO FAR AS TO SAY THIS PLACE IS ALL BUT LIFELESS.
YOU'VE FOUND SURVIVORS ?
WE ARE NOT SURE...
...WE WERE HOPING YOU COULD TELL US.
THE MAN CALLED FORGE WAS IN THIS ROOM ONCE BEFORE...
...MOMENTS BEFORE ASTEROID M EXPLODED FAR ABOVE THE GREEN-WASHED PLANET EARTH, AND ALL ON BOARD WERE PRESUMED KILLED.
THE "STATUES" GENUFLECTING TO THE EMPTY THRONE ARE EASILY RECOGNIZABLE AS THE ACOLYTES KNOWN ONLY AS ANNE MARIE AND DELGADO.
JUST AS THE EMPTY HUSK IN THE CENTER OF THE ROOM COULD ONLY HAVE --
--UNTIL RECENTLY--
--HOUSED THE BODY OF THE MOST DANGEROUS MUTANT ON EARTH...
...MAGNETO -- THE MASTER OF MAGNETISM !

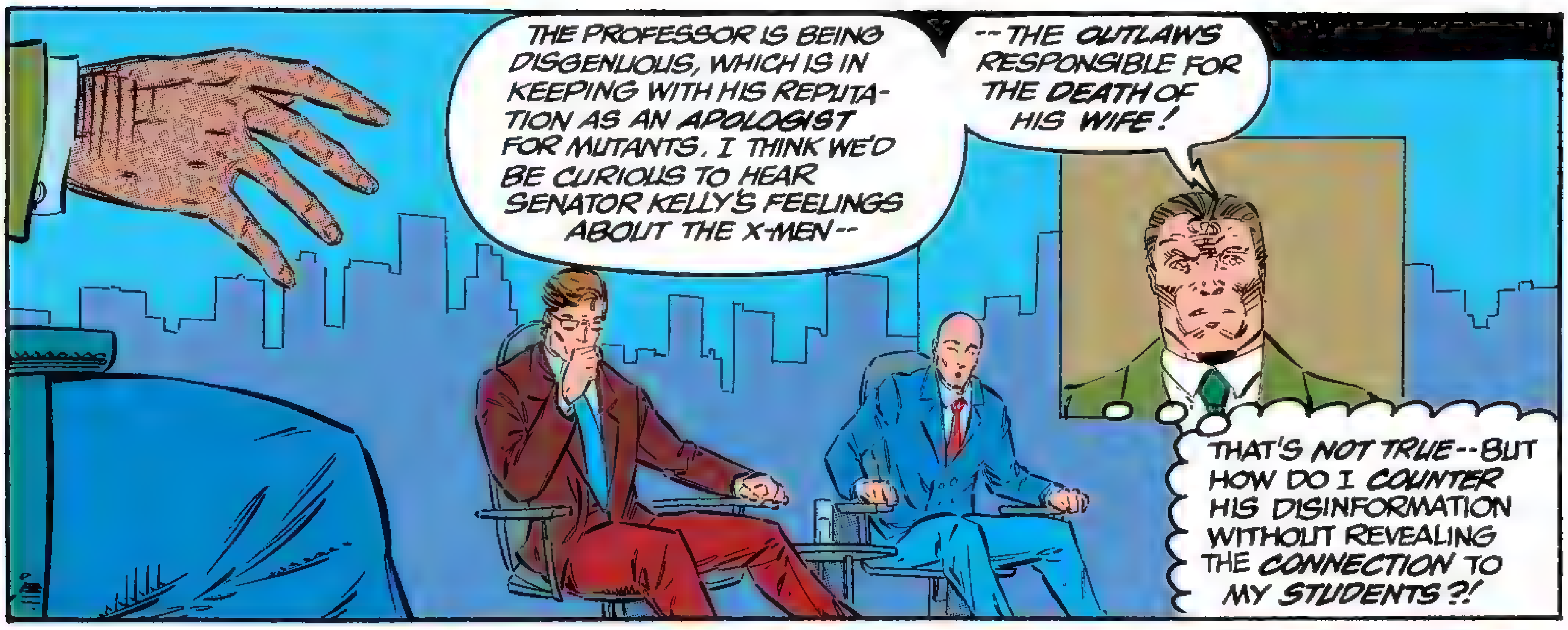

NEW YORK CITY.
ABC NEWS STUDIOS.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT HAS ME MORE *SURPRISED*-- THE FACT YOU *AGREED* TO THIS *TELEVISED* DEBATE ON *MUTANT RIGHTS*...
...OR THAT YOU TOOK FIVE MINUTES TO *EAT AND SHAVE* FOR THE FIRST TIME IN *TWO WEEKS*.
WITH THE CURRENT STATE OF MUTANT AND HUMAN RELATIONS IN A *RAPID* STATE OF *DECAY*, JEAN--
--I'M AFRAID SUCH *PERSONAL LUXURIES* AS PRIVACY AND PHYSICAL APPEARANCE ARE NOT *PARAMOUNT* ON MY LIST OF PRIORITIES.
WE ALL APPRECIATE YOUR DEDICATION, PROFESSOR--BUT YOU'RE STILL RECOVERING FROM STRYFE'S *ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT* ON YOUR LIFE.* YOU'VE *GOT* TO TAKE IT EASY.
YES, THE VERY INCIDENT WHICH *PROPELLED* ME RELUCTANTLY, INTO THE *NATIONAL SPOTLIGHT*.
ALTHOUGH I WOULD MUCH PREFER TO CONDUCT MY AFFAIRS IN *PRIVATE*-- PRIMARILY IN MY ROLE AS *FOUNDER* OF THE *X-MEN*--
--MY BRUSH WITH *MARTYRDOM* HAS ALTERED MY *PUBLIC PERSONA* FROM A WORLD-RENOWNED *EXPERT ON GENETICS*...
...TO WHAT THE MEDIA LIKES TO CALL A "MUTANT RIGHTS ACTIVIST."
OUR DETRACTORS HAVE BEEN USING THE PRESS TO THEIR ADVANTAGE FOR YEARS...
"...MAYBE IT'S TIME WE HAD SOMEONE TO COUNTER THE SENATOR KELLYS OF THE WORLD."
* U.XM #294.--BOB

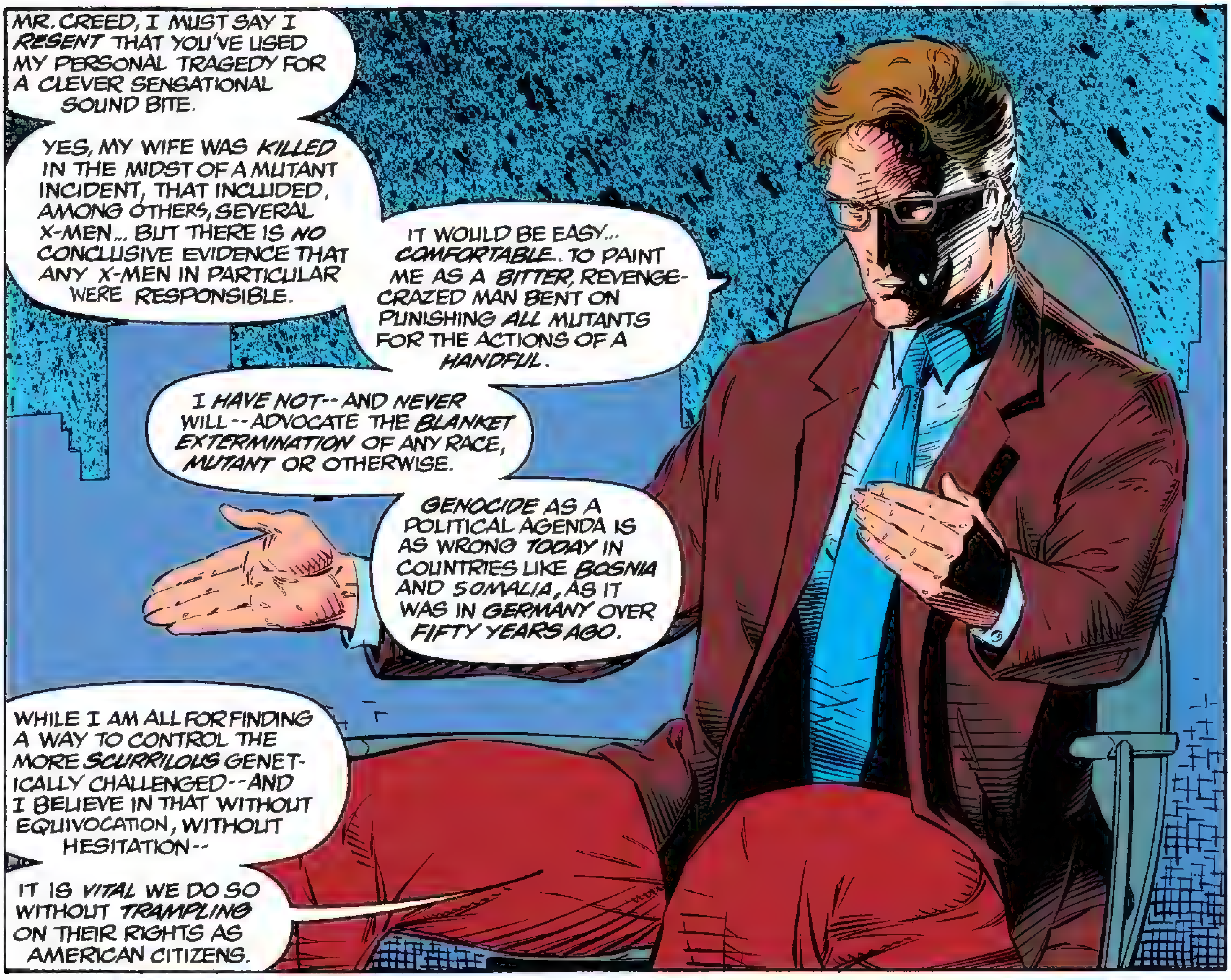
I'M MORE CONCERNED WITH THE THIRD MEMBER OF THIS DEBATE. GRAYDON CREED IS THE MAN BEHIND THE SO-CALLED "FRIENDS OF HUMANITY..."
...A GRASS ROOTS HATE-GROUP THAT CLOAKS ITS MESSAGE OF RACIAL INTOLERANCE IN RESPECTABILITY BY HIDING BEHIND THE FIRST AMENDMENT RIGHT TO FREE SPEECH.
I'VE READ ABOUT THE MAN, CAME OUT OF NOWHERE, INCREDIBLY CHARISMATIC.
WHICH MAKES HIM ALL THE MORE DANGEROUS, JEAN. THAT CHARISMA ENABLES THE "FRIENDS" TO HIDE IN PLAIN SIGHT. ALLOWING HIM THE POPULAR SUPPORT OF THE PEOPLE.
YESTERDAY'S TRAGIC CONFRONTATION UPSTATE WITH THE ACOLYTES ONLY PROVIDES CREED WITH FUEL TO SPREAD ON THE FLAMES OF THE ANTI-MUTANT HYSTERIA THAT IS SPREADING ACROSS THE COUNTRY.
UNFORTUNATELY, EACH TERRORIST ACT COMMITTED BY THE M.L.F OR THE ACOLYTES ONLY ADDS CREDENCE TO THE FRIENDS' AGENDA.
CHARLES, IF YOU'RE NOT UP TO THIS...?
SIR, WE'RE READY.
WHILE YOU'RE CERTAINLY MORE PHOTOGENIC THAN I, JEAN -- THIS IS MY RESPONSIBILITY.
ONE I MAY HAVE PUT OFF FOR FAR TOO LONG.
SENATOR KELLY, PROFESSOR XAVIER...
IT IS A PLEASURE TO MEET YOU, PROFESSOR, I'VE ADMIRED YOUR WORK.
AND YOUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS ARE BEYOND REPROACH, SENATOR.
03
SAT FEED
ONLINE
01:10:00
FIVE.
FOUR.
THREE.
AND MARK...
MR. CREED WILL BE JOINING US VIA SATELLITE.

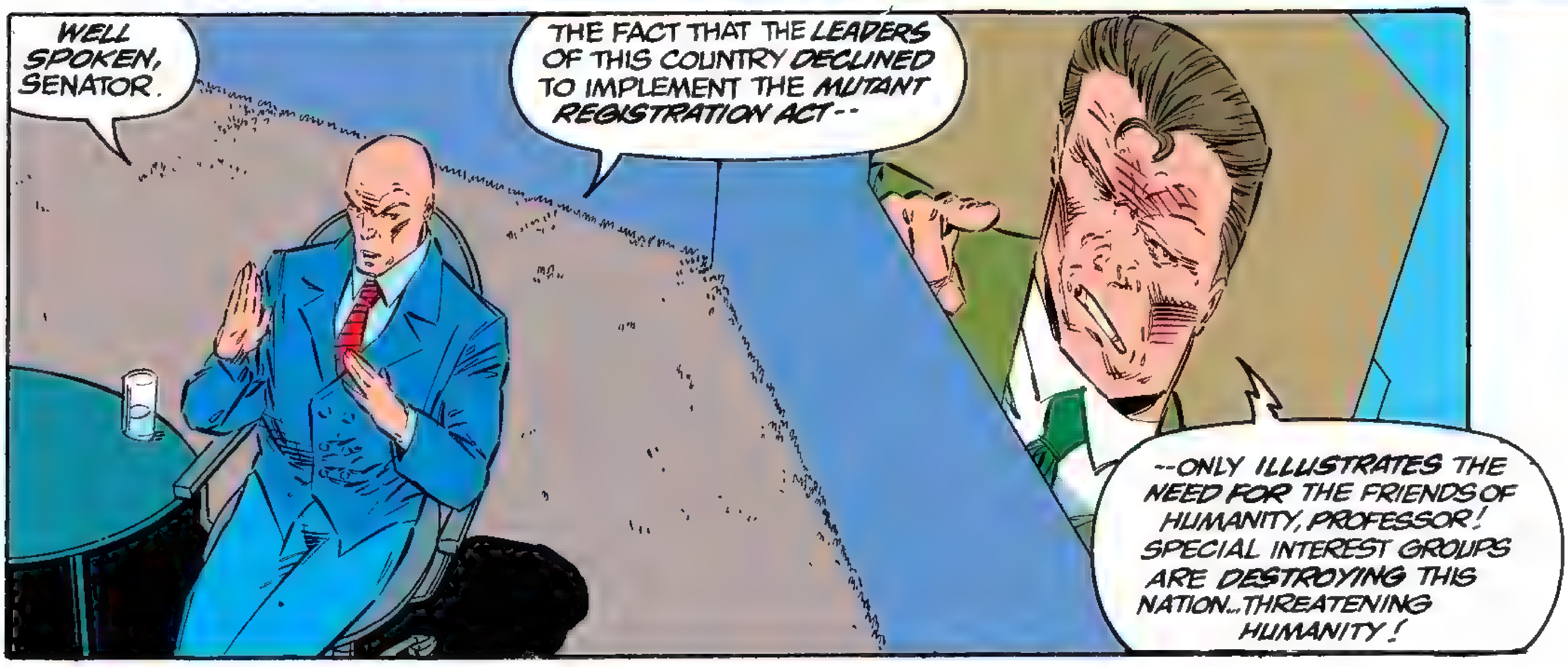

St. Mary's Boys Home
TONIGHT, ON A SPECIAL EDITION OF NIGHTLINE...
... "MUTANTS-- THE GENETIC TIMEBOMB?"
SITTING IN FOR TED KOPPEL, IS ELTON CAYER.
UNTIL YESTERDAY, PEOPLE ACROSS AMERICA HAD INDULGED IN A FALSE SENSE OF SECURITY--
--THAT THE EVER-GROWING MUTANT PROPULACE...
...AND THE RESULTING TENSIONS BETWEEN HUMANS AND THESE GENETIC ANOMALIES...
...WERE STRICTLY THE CONCERNS OF THOSE UNFORTUNATE ENOUGH TO LIVE AMIDST THE BATTLE GROUNDS OF THE NATION'S BIG CITIES.
MUTANTS
GENETIC TIME BOMB
IN THE SMALL TOWN OF MIDDLEBOROUGH, NEW YORK, FOURTEEN CORPSES HAVE SHATTERED THOSE ILLUSIONS... FOREVER.
THE CITIZENS OF THIS UPSTATE HAMLET WERE VICTIMS OF A SAVAGE "GENETIC-CLEANSING" AT THE HANDS OF A MUTANT TERRORIST GROUP KNOWN AS THE ACOLYTES...
WELL, TED-- WE'VE ESTABLISHED YOUR MUTANT POWER...
...IS DEFINITELY NOT THE ABILITY TO STAY UP PAST BEDTIME TO WATCH THE NEWS.
IT SEEMS THE ACOLYTES DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TEDDY MATSON'S LATENT ABILITIES WERE WHEN THEY ATTEMPTED TO KIDNAP HIM--
--NO MORE THAN THEY KNEW HE HAD DOWN'S SYNDROME.
IN UNUSCIONE'S WORDS, THAT MADE HIM "UNFIT" TO TAKE PART IN THEIR NEW WORLD ORDER.
FUNNY, AS MUTANTS THEY, MORE THAN ANYBODY, SHOULD KNOW DIVERSITY IS SOMETHING TO BE CELEBRATED-- NOT ASHAMED OF...
YOU ARE THE ONE THEY CALL "THE ARCHANGEL?"
YES, MOTHER SUPERIOR. DON'T BOTHER CALLING THE POLICE--
--I'LL BE GONE BY THE TIME THEY ARRIVE.

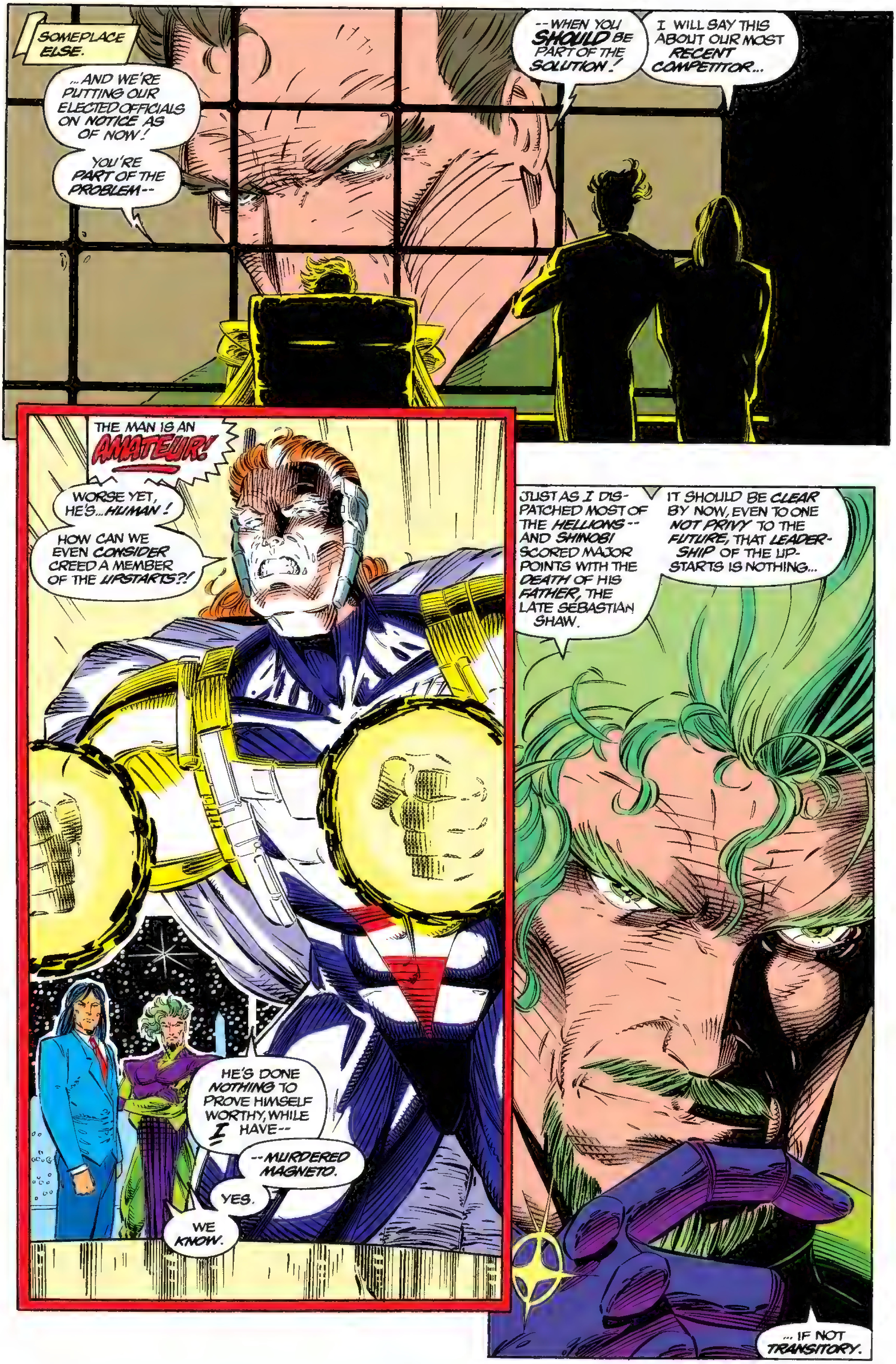

SON, NOT *EVERYONE* BELIEVES THAT ALL MUTANTS ARE TO BE *FEARED* AND *HATED*.
THERE ARE THOSE OF US WHO ARE *GRATEFUL* TO THE X-MEN FOR RISKING THEIR LIVES ON OUR BEHALF.
FAITH IS IMPORTANT--
--BUT IT'S COMFORTING TO KNOW WITH *CERTAINTY* THAT ANGELS TRULY *DO* WALK AMONG US.
I APPRECIATE THE *SENTIMENT*, MOTHER-- BUT AFTER EVERYTHING I'VE DONE IN MY LIFE...
...SOMETIMES I THINK I'M *BEYOND* REDEMPTION.
THERE IS *NO SUCH* THING.
YOU *COULD* HAVE TOLD THE AUTHORITIES TEDDY WAS A MUTANT. YET YOU SPARED HIM THE *SCORN AND SCRUTINY* OF *"PUBLIC SERVANTS"* LIKE THE SO-CALLED *"HONORABLE"* SENATOR KELLY.
IF THERE IS *ANYTHING* I CAN DO FOR YOU OR YOUR COMPANIONS..?
IF THE GOVERNMENT WON'T DEFEND THE COMMON MAN THEN IT'S TIME WE DEFENDED OURSELVES.
YOU CAN *PRAY*, MOTHER.
PRAY FOR *EVERY* ONE OF US.
CLK

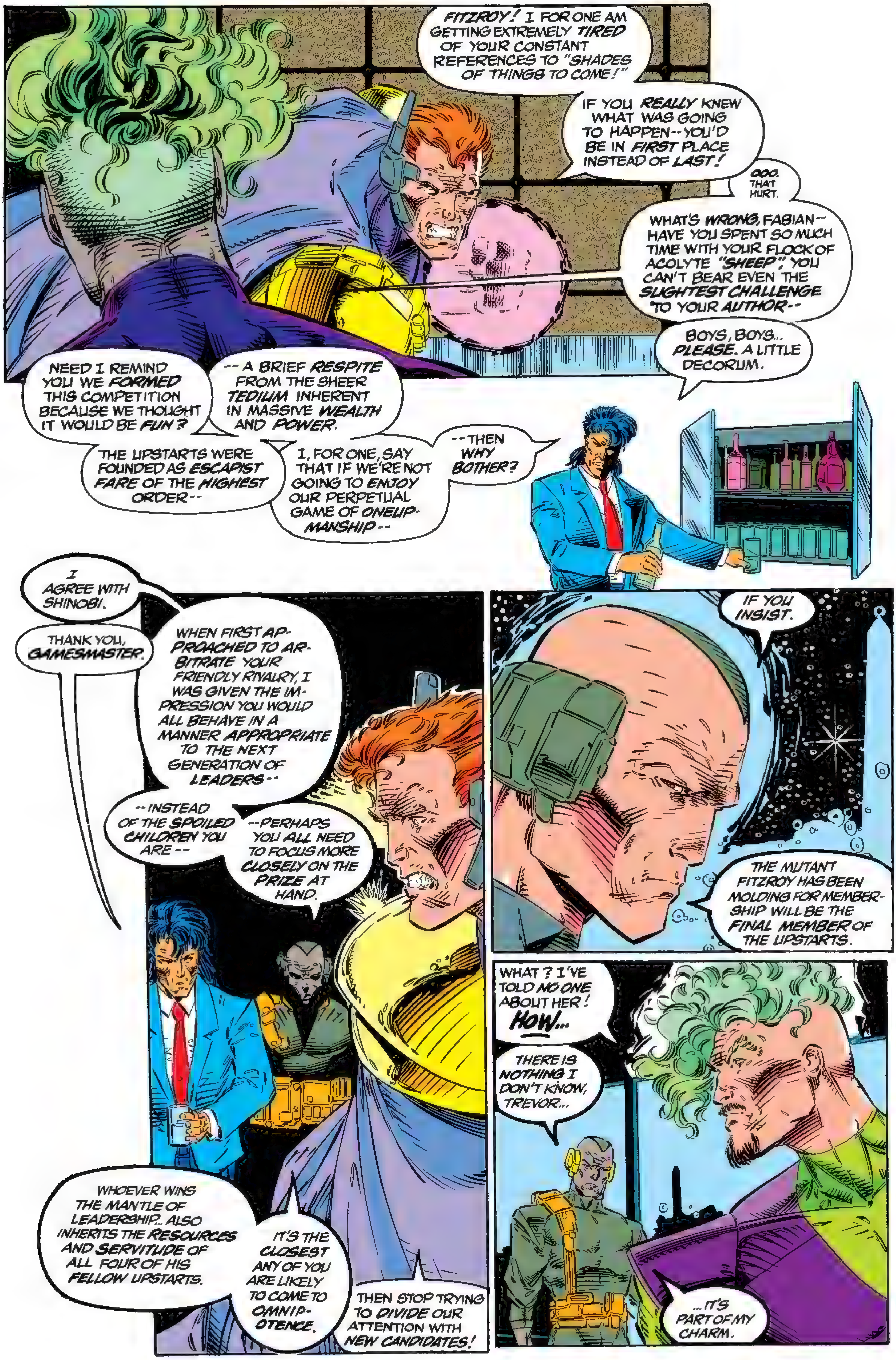

NO SANE MAN WILL ARGUE THAT MUTANTS--BY THEIR NATURE--ARE, IN SOME CASES, INFINITELY MORE POWERFUL THAN HUMAN BEINGS.
ALL MY ORGANIZATION, THE FRIENDS OF HUMANITY, IS ADVOCATING IS AN ORGANIZATION THAT LOOKS OUT FOR THE RIGHTS OF US HUMANS!
SOUNDS REASONABLE TO ME.
THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT IS AWARE OF ITS RESPONSIBILITIES TO ALL ITS CITIZENS, MR. CREED.
THIS'S ONE REASON I'M PROUD I SERVE AS THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE ON MUTANT AFFAIRS.. IT'S WHY THE MUTANT GROUP X-FACTOR OPERATES UNDER FEDERAL AUSPICES.
THE CONCERN I SHARE WITH SENATOR KELLY REGARDING MR. CREED'S ORGANIZATION...
...IS THE FRIENDS OF HUMANITY'S WILLINGNESS--IN SOME CASES EAGERNESS--TO VIOLATE THE CIVIL RIGHTS OF ANYONE WHO DOES NOT FIT THEIR RATHER LIMITED DEFINITION OF "HUMAN."
COULD IT BE, PROFESSOR, THAT THEIR ADMITTEDLY QUESTIONABLE ACTIONS ARE A JUSTIFIABLE RESPONSE TO THE EVER-GROWING NUMBER OF ANTI-HUMAN FACTIONS AMONG THE HOMO-SUPERIOR POPULATION?
THESE ACOLYTES, THE BROTHERHOOD OF EVIL MUTANTS, THE MUTANT LIBERATION FRONT ARE BUT A FEW--
--ARE BUT A FEW OF THE HIGH PROFILE MUTANTS WHO, REGRETTABLY, GET THE LION'S SHARE OF MEDIA ATTENTION.
PERHAPS IF THE PRESS WERE MORE INCLINED TO FOCUS ON THE EXPLOITS OF OTHER MUTANTS SUCH AS THE X-MEN, WHO HAVE SERVED THE WORLD ON MORE THAN ONE OCCASION...
...OR REMEMBERED THERE ARE MANY, MANY MUTANTS WHO LIVE QUIET PEACEFUL LIVES, WHO GO TO WORK EVERYDAY. WHO CARE FOR THEIR FAMILIES...
...AND YET LIVE IN FEAR THAT PEOPLE LIKE MR. CREED'S ASSOCIATES WILL RIP EVERY INALIENABLE RIGHT FROM THEM, SIMPLY BECAUSE OF WHO THEY ARE!

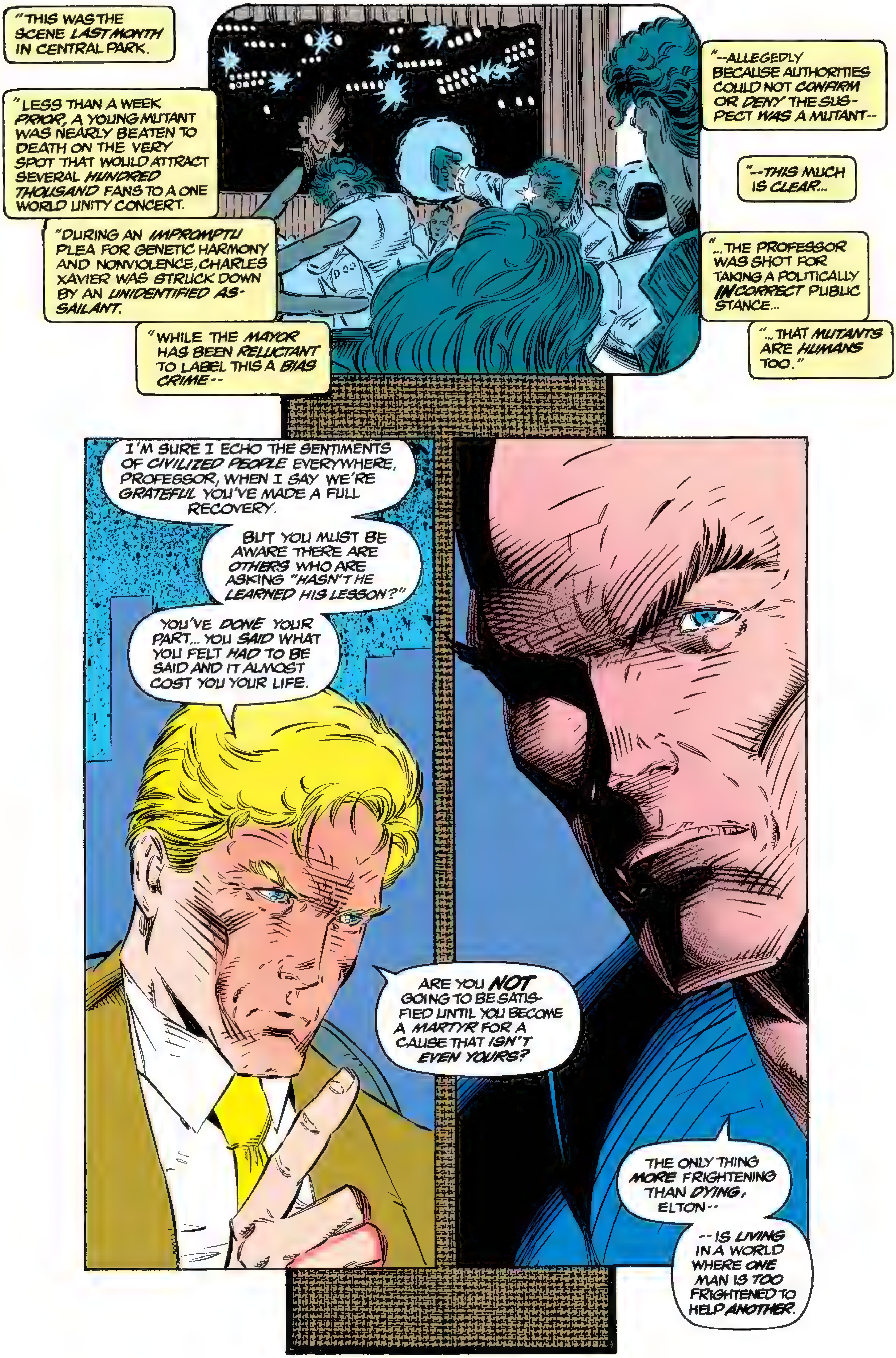

THE PROFESSOR IS BEING DISGENUOUS, WHICH IS IN KEEPING WITH HIS REPUTATION AS AN *APOLOGIST* FOR MUTANTS. I THINK WE'D BE CURIOUS TO HEAR SENATOR KELLY'S FEELINGS ABOUT THE X-MEN--
--THE *OUTLAWS* RESPONSIBLE FOR THE *DEATH* OF HIS *WIFE*!
THAT'S *NOT TRUE*--BUT HOW DO I *COUNTER* HIS DISINFORMATION WITHOUT REVEALING THE *CONNECTION* TO MY *STUDENTS*?!

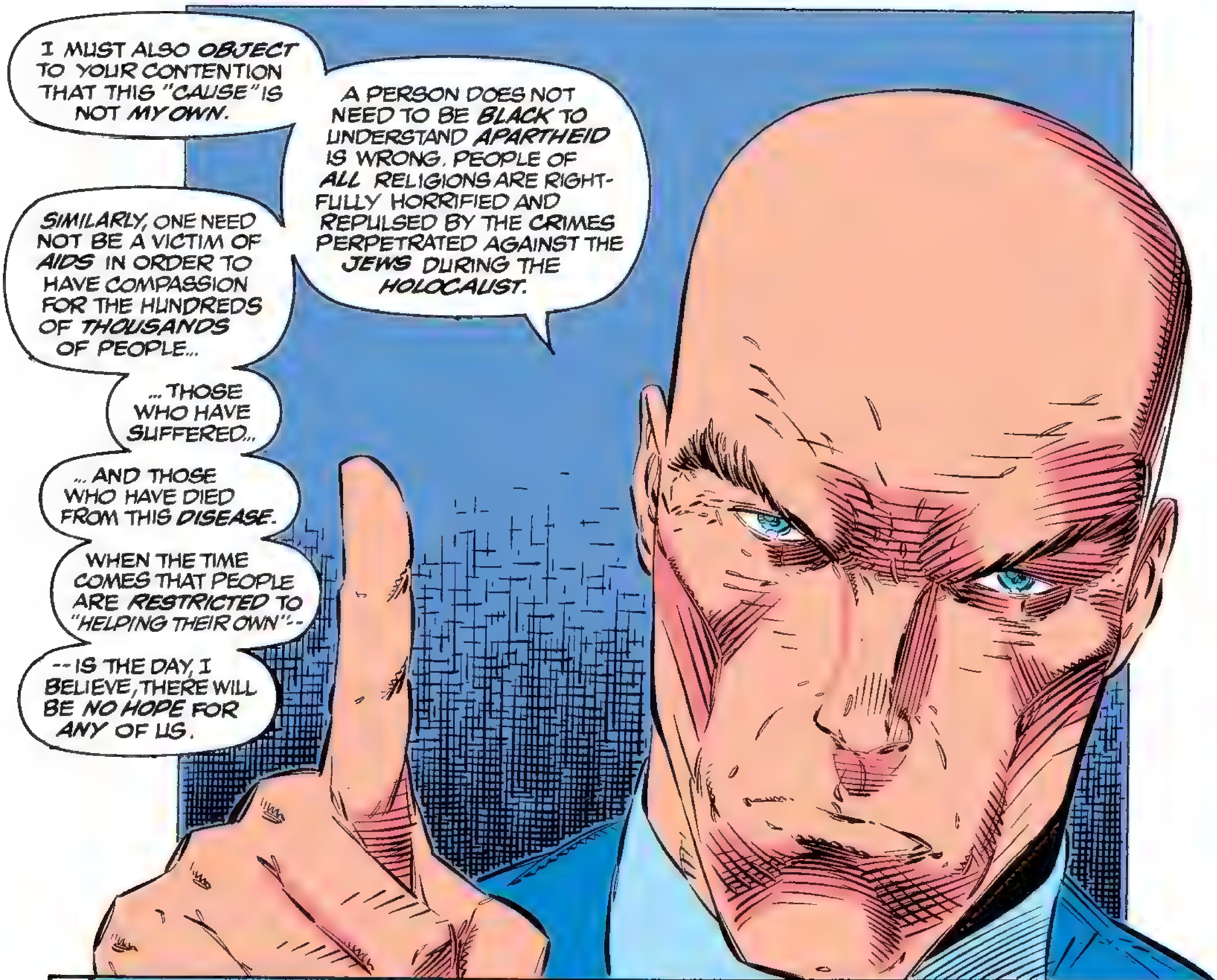

MR. CREED, I MUST SAY I *RESENT* THAT YOU'VE USED MY PERSONAL TRAGEDY FOR A CLEVER SENSATIONAL SOUND BITE.
YES, MY WIFE WAS *KILLED* IN THE MIDST OF A MUTANT INCIDENT, THAT INCLUDED, AMONG OTHERS, SEVERAL X-MEN... BUT THERE IS *NO* CONCLUSIVE EVIDENCE THAT ANY X-MEN IN PARTICULAR WERE RESPONSIBLE.
IT WOULD BE EASY... *COMFORTABLE*... TO PAINT ME AS A *BITTER*, REVENGE-CRAZED MAN BENT ON PUNISHING *ALL* MUTANTS FOR THE ACTIONS OF A *HANDFUL*.
I *HAVE NOT*--AND *NEVER* WILL--ADVOCATE THE *BLANKET EXTERMINATION* OF ANY RACE, *MUTANT* OR OTHERWISE.
GENOCIDE AS A POLITICAL AGENDA IS AS WRONG *TODAY* IN COUNTRIES LIKE *BOSNIA* AND *SOMALIA*, AS IT WAS IN *GERMANY* OVER *FIFTY YEARS AGO*.
WHILE I AM ALL FOR FINDING A WAY TO CONTROL THE MORE *SCURRILOUS* GENETICALLY CHALLENGED--AND I BELIEVE IN THAT WITHOUT EQUIVOCATION, WITHOUT HESITATION--
IT IS *VITAL* WE DO SO WITHOUT *TRAMPLING* ON THEIR RIGHTS AS AMERICAN CITIZENS.

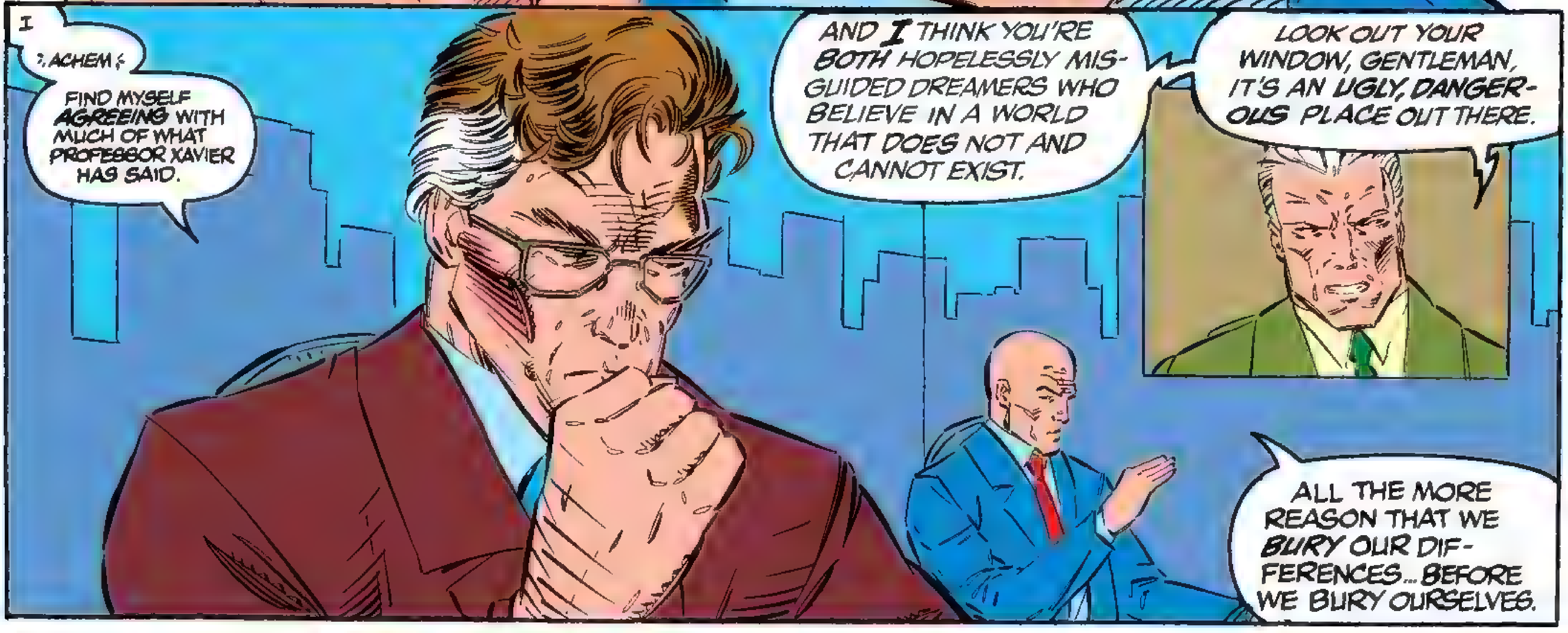

WELL SPOKEN, SENATOR.
THE FACT THAT THE *LEADERS* OF THIS COUNTRY *DECLINED* TO IMPLEMENT THE *MUTANT REGISTRATION ACT*--
--ONLY *ILLUSTRATES* THE *NEED FOR* THE FRIENDS OF HUMANITY, *PROFESSOR*! SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS *ARE DESTROYING* THIS NATION... THREATENING *HUMANITY*!

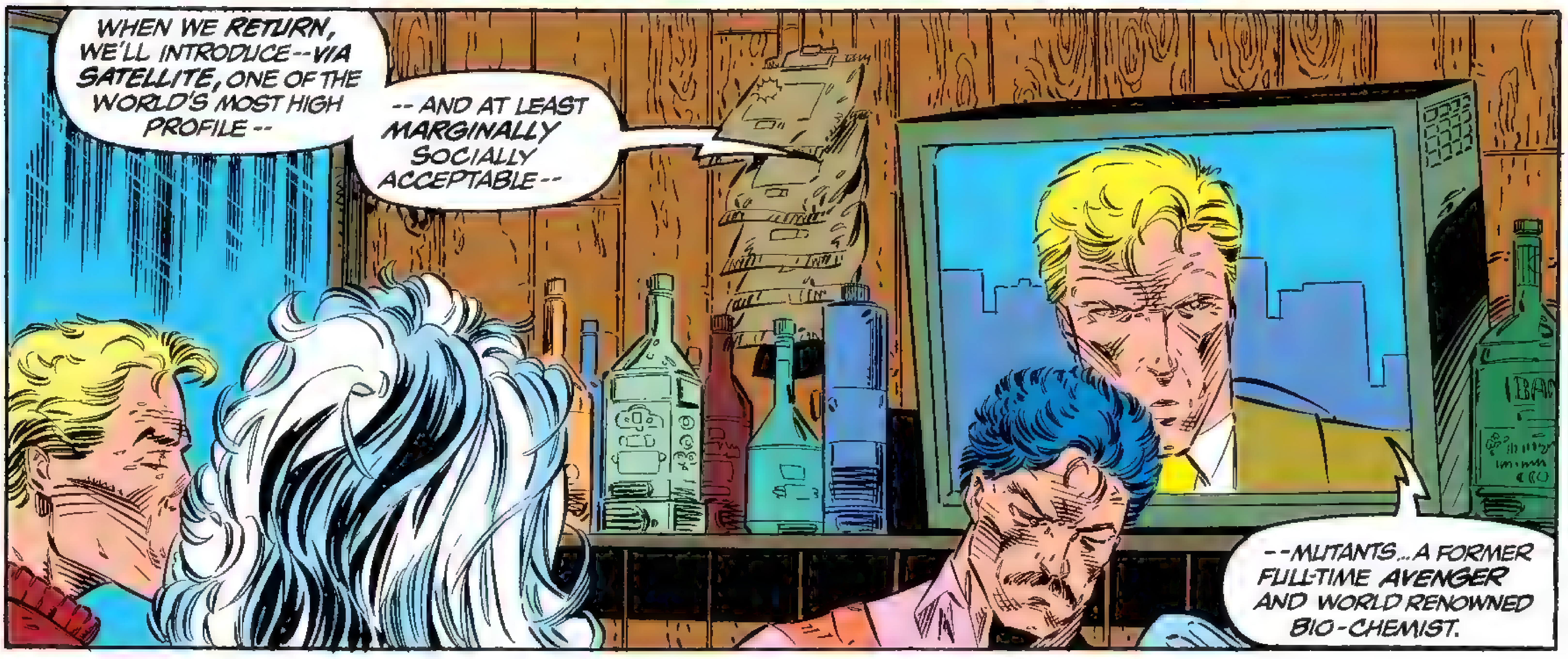

SOMEPLACE ELSE.
...AND WE'RE PUTTING OUR ELECTED OFFICIALS ON NOTICE AS OF NOW!
YOU'RE PART OF THE PROBLEM--
--WHEN YOU SHOULD BE PART OF THE SOLUTION!
I WILL SAY THIS ABOUT OUR MOST RECENT COMPETITOR...
THE MAN IS AN AMATEUR!
WORSE YET, HE'S...HUMAN!
HOW CAN WE EVEN CONSIDER CREED A MEMBER OF THE UPSTARTS?!
HE'S DONE NOTHING TO PROVE HIMSELF WORTHY, WHILE I HAVE--
--MURDERED MAGNETO.
YES.
WE KNOW.
JUST AS I DISPATCHED MOST OF THE HELLIONS-- AND SHINOBI SCORED MAJOR POINTS WITH THE DEATH OF HIS FATHER, THE LATE SEBASTIAN SHAW.
IT SHOULD BE CLEAR BY NOW, EVEN TO ONE NOT PRIVY TO THE FUTURE, THAT LEADERSHIP OF THE UPSTARTS IS NOTHING...
...IF NOT TRANSITORY.

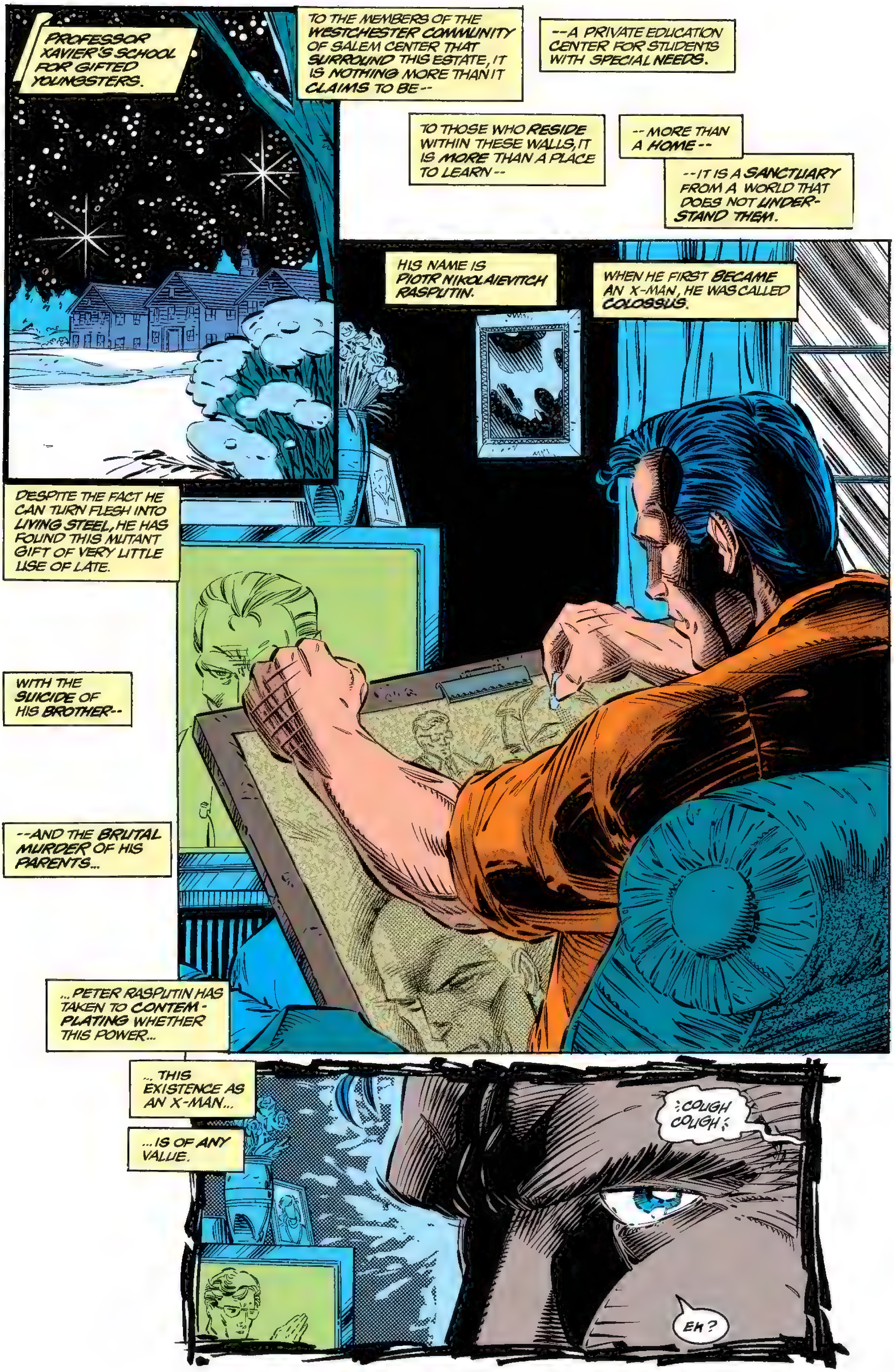

FITZROY! I FOR ONE AM GETTING EXTREMELY TIRED OF YOUR CONSTANT REFERENCES TO "SHADES OF THINGS TO COME!"
IF YOU REALLY KNEW WHAT WAS GOING TO HAPPEN--YOU'D BE IN FIRST PLACE INSTEAD OF LAST!
OOO. THAT HURT.
WHAT'S WRONG, FABIAN--HAVE YOU SPENT SO MUCH TIME WITH YOUR FLOCK OF ACOLYTE "SHEEP," YOU CAN'T BEAR EVEN THE SLIGHTEST CHALLENGE TO YOUR AUTHOR--
BOYS, BOYS... PLEASE. A LITTLE DECORUM.
NEED I REMIND YOU WE FORMED THIS COMPETITION BECAUSE WE THOUGHT IT WOULD BE FUN?
--A BRIEF RESPITE FROM THE SHEER TEDIUM INHERENT IN MASSIVE WEALTH AND POWER.
THE UPSTARTS WERE FOUNDED AS ESCAPIST FARE OF THE HIGHEST ORDER--
I, FOR ONE, SAY THAT IF WE'RE NOT GOING TO ENJOY OUR PERPETUAL GAME OF ONEUPMANSHIP--
--THEN WHY BOTHER?
I AGREE WITH SHINOBI.
THANK YOU, GAMESMASTER.
WHEN FIRST APPROACHED TO ARBITRATE YOUR FRIENDLY RIVALRY, I WAS GIVEN THE IMPRESSION YOU WOULD ALL BEHAVE IN A MANNER APPROPRIATE TO THE NEXT GENERATION OF LEADERS--
--INSTEAD OF THE SPOILED CHILDREN YOU ARE--
--PERHAPS YOU ALL NEED TO FOCUS MORE CLOSELY ON THE PRIZE AT HAND.
WHOEVER WINS THE MANTLE OF LEADERSHIP... ALSO INHERITS THE RESOURCES AND SERVITUDE OF ALL FOUR OF HIS FELLOW UPSTARTS.
IT'S THE CLOSEST ANY OF YOU ARE LIKELY TO COME TO OMNIPOTENCE.
THEN STOP TRYING TO DIVIDE OUR ATTENTION WITH NEW CANDIDATES!
IF YOU INSIST.
THE MUTANT FITZROY HAS BEEN MOLDING FOR MEMBERSHIP WILL BE THE FINAL MEMBER OF THE UPSTARTS.
WHAT? I'VE TOLD NO ONE ABOUT HER! HOW...
THERE IS NOTHING I DON'T KNOW, TREVOR...
...IT'S PART OF MY CHARM.

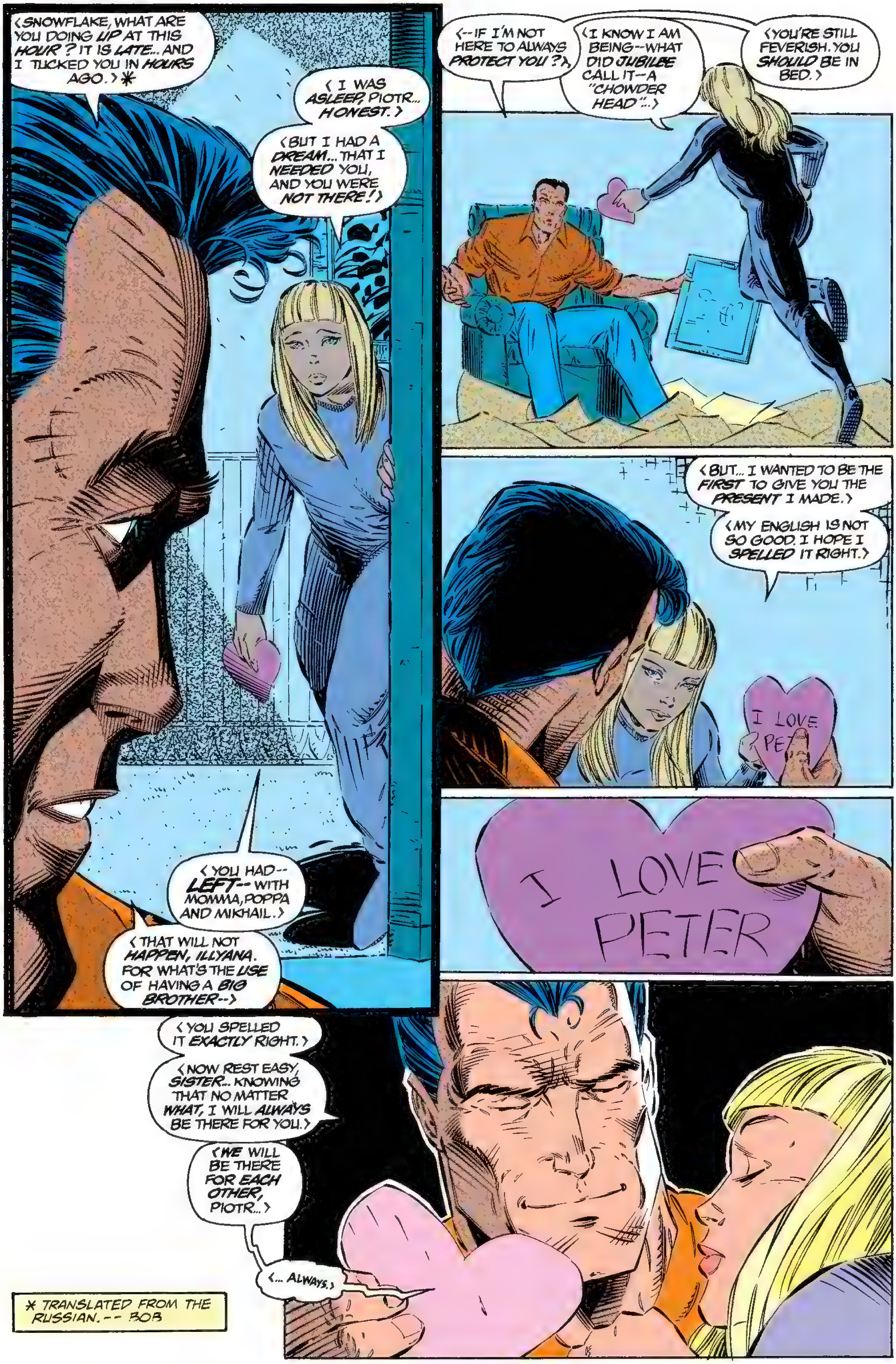

"THIS WAS THE SCENE *LAST MONTH* IN CENTRAL PARK.
"LESS THAN A WEEK *PRIOR*, A YOUNG MUTANT WAS NEARLY BEATEN TO DEATH ON THE VERY SPOT THAT WOULD ATTRACT SEVERAL *HUNDRED THOUSAND* FANS TO A ONE WORLD UNITY CONCERT.
"DURING AN *IMPROMPTU* PLEA FOR GENETIC HARMONY AND NONVIOLENCE, CHARLES XAVIER WAS STRUCK DOWN BY AN *UNIDENTIFIED ASSAILANT*.
"WHILE THE *MAYOR* HAS BEEN *RELUCTANT* TO LABEL THIS A *BIAS CRIME*--
"--ALLEGEDLY BECAUSE AUTHORITIES COULD NOT *CONFIRM* OR *DENY* THE SUSPECT *WAS* A MUTANT--
"--*THIS MUCH* IS *CLEAR*...
"...THE PROFESSOR WAS SHOT FOR TAKING A POLITICALLY *IN*CORRECT PUBLIC STANCE...
"...THAT *MUTANTS* ARE *HUMANS* TOO."
I'M SURE I ECHO THE SENTIMENTS OF *CIVILIZED PEOPLE* EVERYWHERE, PROFESSOR, WHEN I SAY WE'RE *GRATEFUL* YOU'VE MADE A FULL RECOVERY.
BUT YOU MUST BE AWARE THERE ARE *OTHERS* WHO ARE ASKING *"HASN'T HE LEARNED HIS LESSON?"*
YOU'VE *DONE* YOUR PART... YOU *SAID* WHAT YOU FELT *HAD* TO BE SAID AND IT ALMOST COST YOU YOUR LIFE.
ARE YOU *NOT* GOING TO BE SATISFIED UNTIL YOU BECOME A *MARTYR* FOR A CAUSE THAT *ISN'T EVEN YOURS?*
THE ONLY THING *MORE* FRIGHTENING THAN *DYING*, ELTON--
--IS *LIVING* IN A WORLD WHERE *ONE* MAN IS *TOO* FRIGHTENED TO HELP *ANOTHER*.

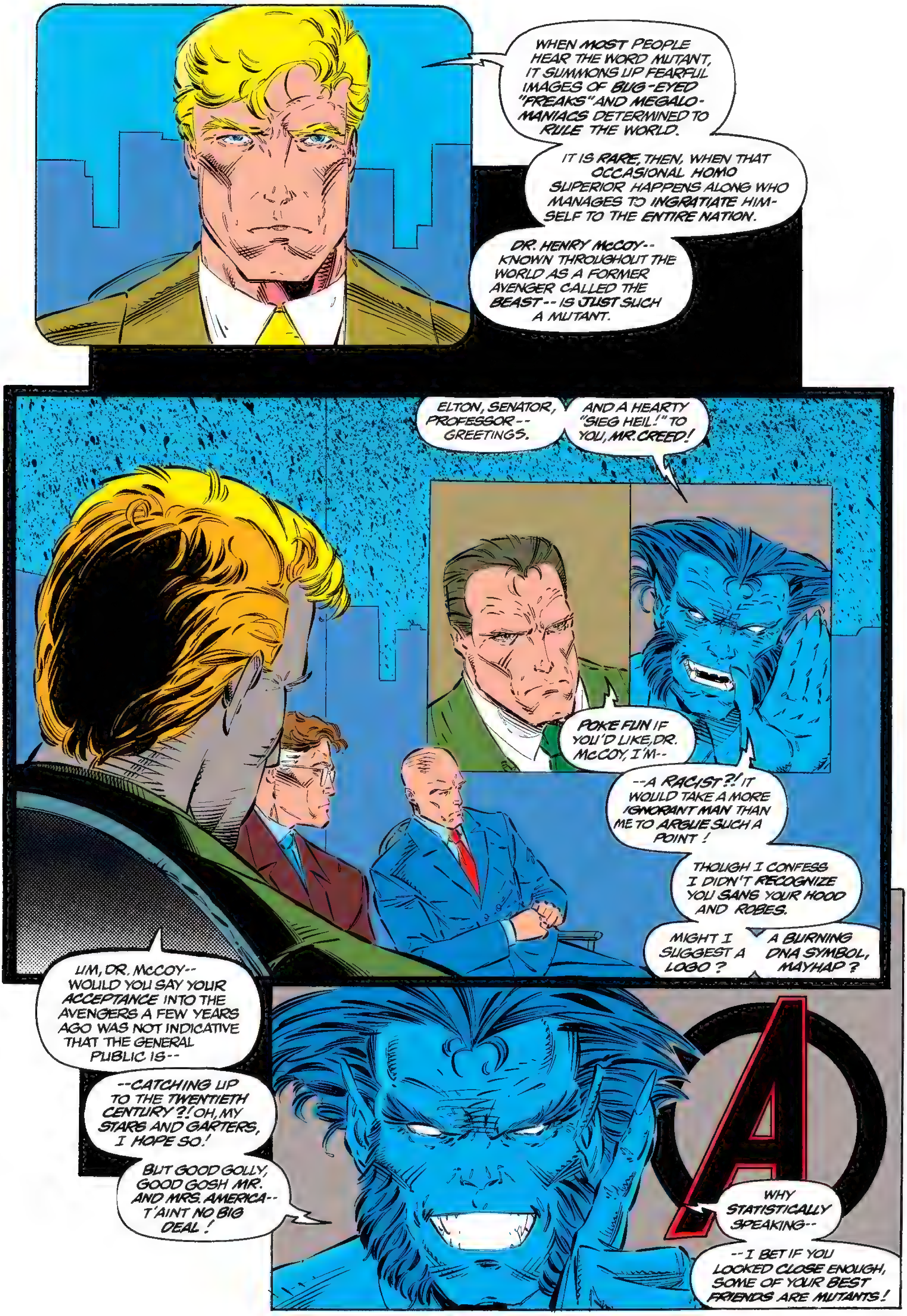

I MUST ALSO OBJECT TO YOUR CONTENTION THAT THIS "CAUSE" IS NOT MY OWN.
A PERSON DOES NOT NEED TO BE BLACK TO UNDERSTAND APARTHEID IS WRONG. PEOPLE OF ALL RELIGIONS ARE RIGHTFULLY HORRIFIED AND REPULSED BY THE CRIMES PERPETRATED AGAINST THE JEWS DURING THE HOLOCAUST.
SIMILARLY, ONE NEED NOT BE A VICTIM OF AIDS IN ORDER TO HAVE COMPASSION FOR THE HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE...
...THOSE WHO HAVE SUFFERED...
...AND THOSE WHO HAVE DIED FROM THIS DISEASE.
WHEN THE TIME COMES THAT PEOPLE ARE RESTRICTED TO "HELPING THEIR OWN"--
--IS THE DAY, I BELIEVE, THERE WILL BE NO HOPE FOR ANY OF US.

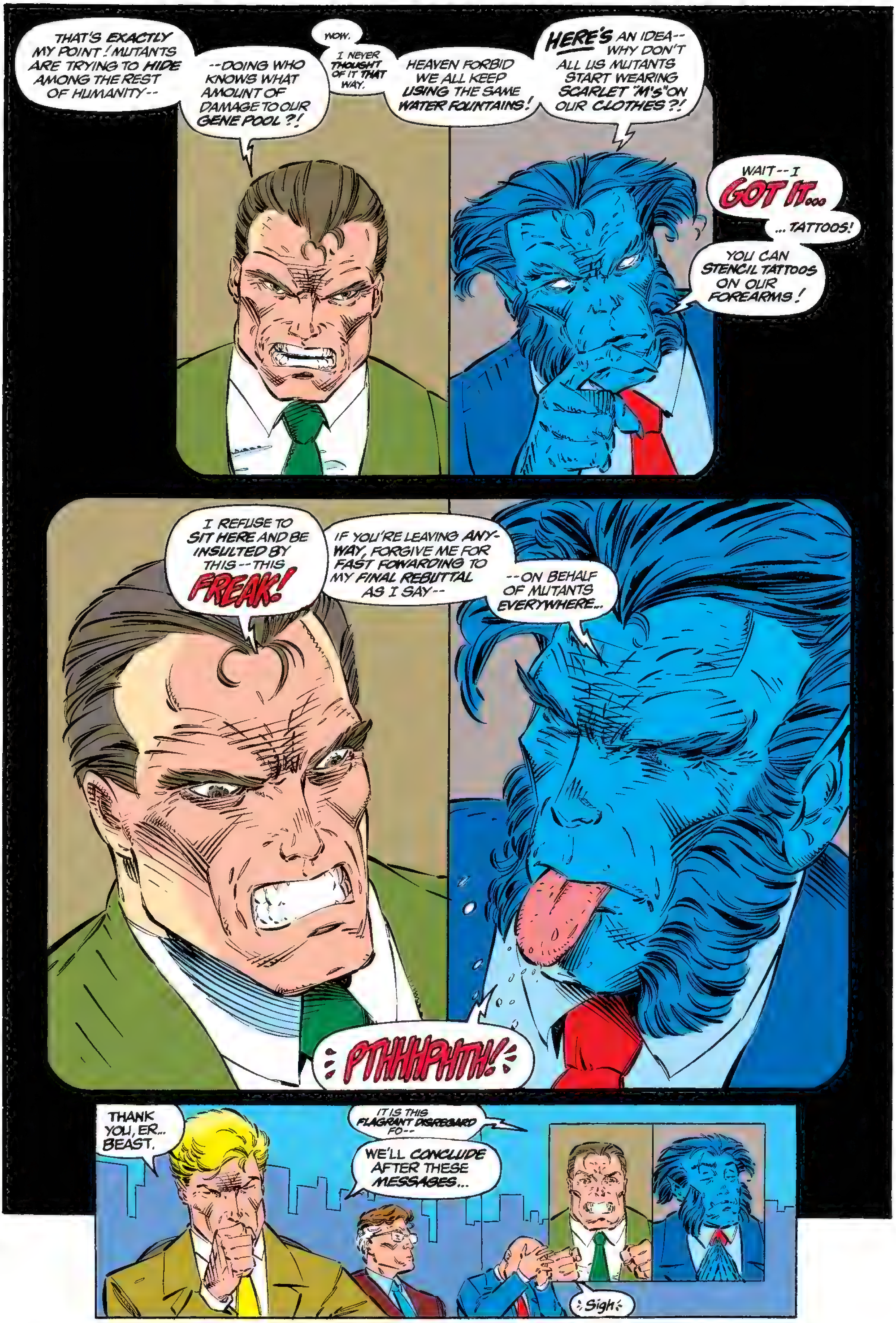

I ;ACHEM; FIND MYSELF AGREEING WITH MUCH OF WHAT PROFESSOR XAVIER HAS SAID.
AND I THINK YOU'RE BOTH HOPELESSLY MISGUIDED DREAMERS WHO BELIEVE IN A WORLD THAT DOES NOT AND CANNOT EXIST.
LOOK OUT YOUR WINDOW, GENTLEMAN, IT'S AN UGLY, DANGEROUS PLACE OUT THERE.
ALL THE MORE REASON THAT WE BURY OUR DIFFERENCES... BEFORE WE BURY OURSELVES.

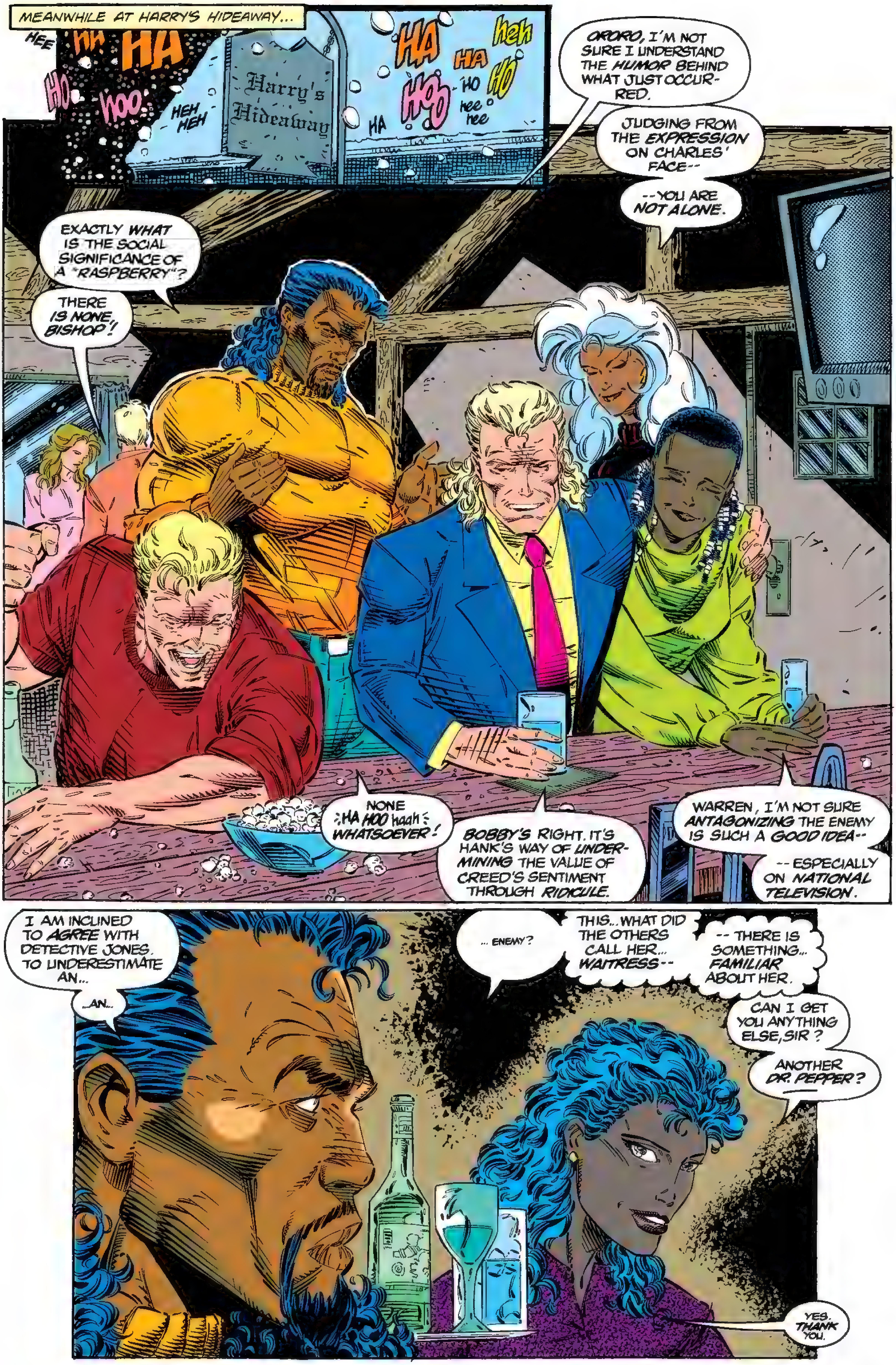

WHEN WE RETURN, WE'LL INTRODUCE--VIA SATELLITE, ONE OF THE WORLD'S MOST HIGH PROFILE--
--AND AT LEAST MARGINALLY SOCIALLY ACCEPTABLE--
--MUTANTS... A FORMER FULL-TIME AVENGER AND WORLD RENOWNED BIO-CHEMIST.

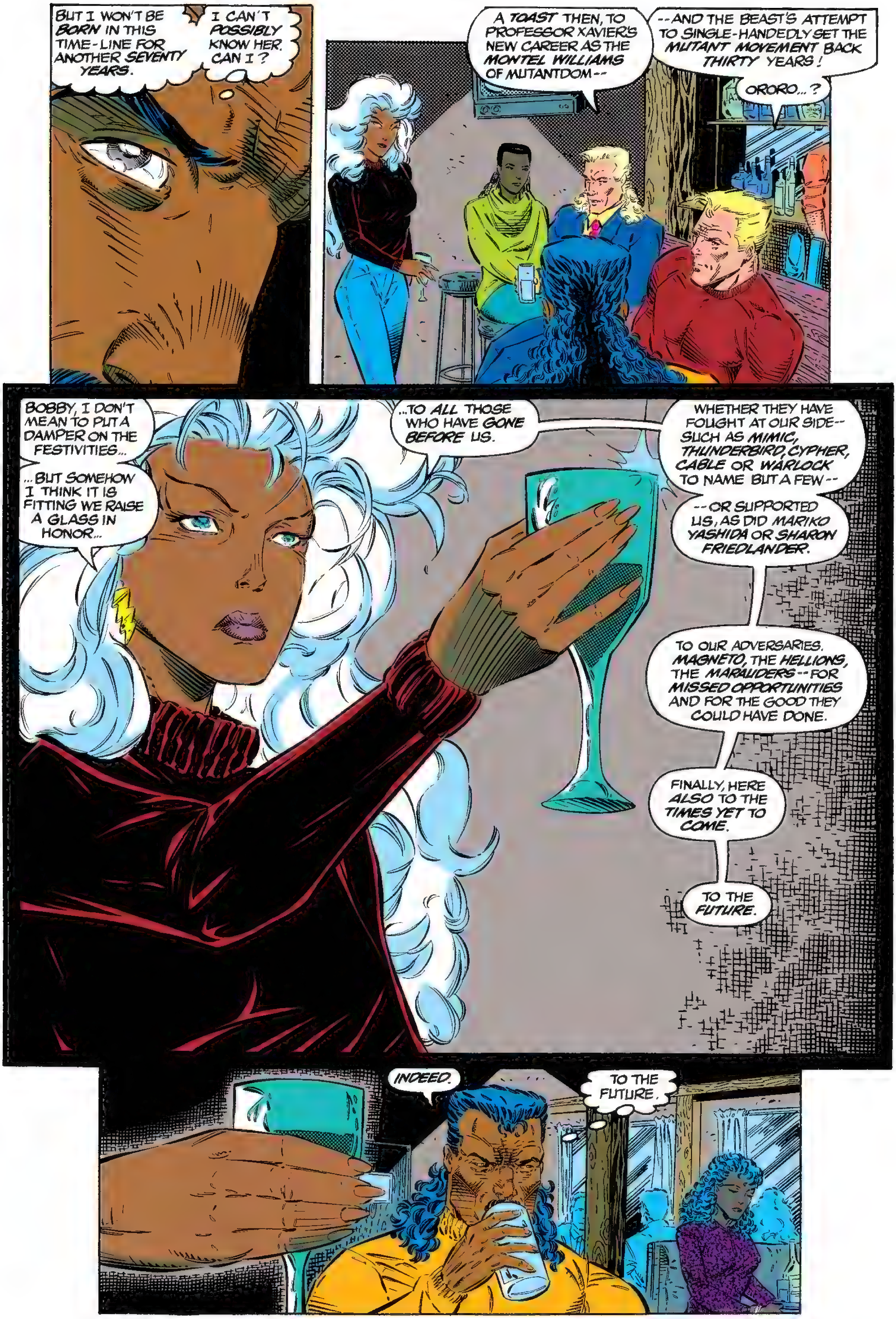

PROFESSOR XAVIER'S SCHOOL FOR GIFTED YOUNGSTERS.
TO THE MEMBERS OF THE WESTCHESTER COMMUNITY OF SALEM CENTER THAT SURROUND THIS ESTATE, IT IS NOTHING MORE THAN IT CLAIMS TO BE--
--A PRIVATE EDUCATION CENTER FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS.
TO THOSE WHO RESIDE WITHIN THESE WALLS, IT IS MORE THAN A PLACE TO LEARN--
--MORE THAN A HOME--
--IT IS A SANCTUARY FROM A WORLD THAT DOES NOT UNDERSTAND THEM.
HIS NAME IS PIOTR NIKOLAIEVITCH RASPUTIN.
WHEN HE FIRST BECAME AN X-MAN, HE WAS CALLED COLOSSUS.
DESPITE THE FACT HE CAN TURN FLESH INTO LIVING STEEL, HE HAS FOUND THIS MUTANT GIFT OF VERY LITTLE USE OF LATE.
WITH THE SUICIDE OF HIS BROTHER--
--AND THE BRUTAL MURDER OF HIS PARENTS...
...PETER RASPUTIN HAS TAKEN TO CONTEMPLATING WHETHER THIS POWER...
...THIS EXISTENCE AS AN X-MAN...
...IS OF ANY VALUE.
:COUGH COUGH:
EH?

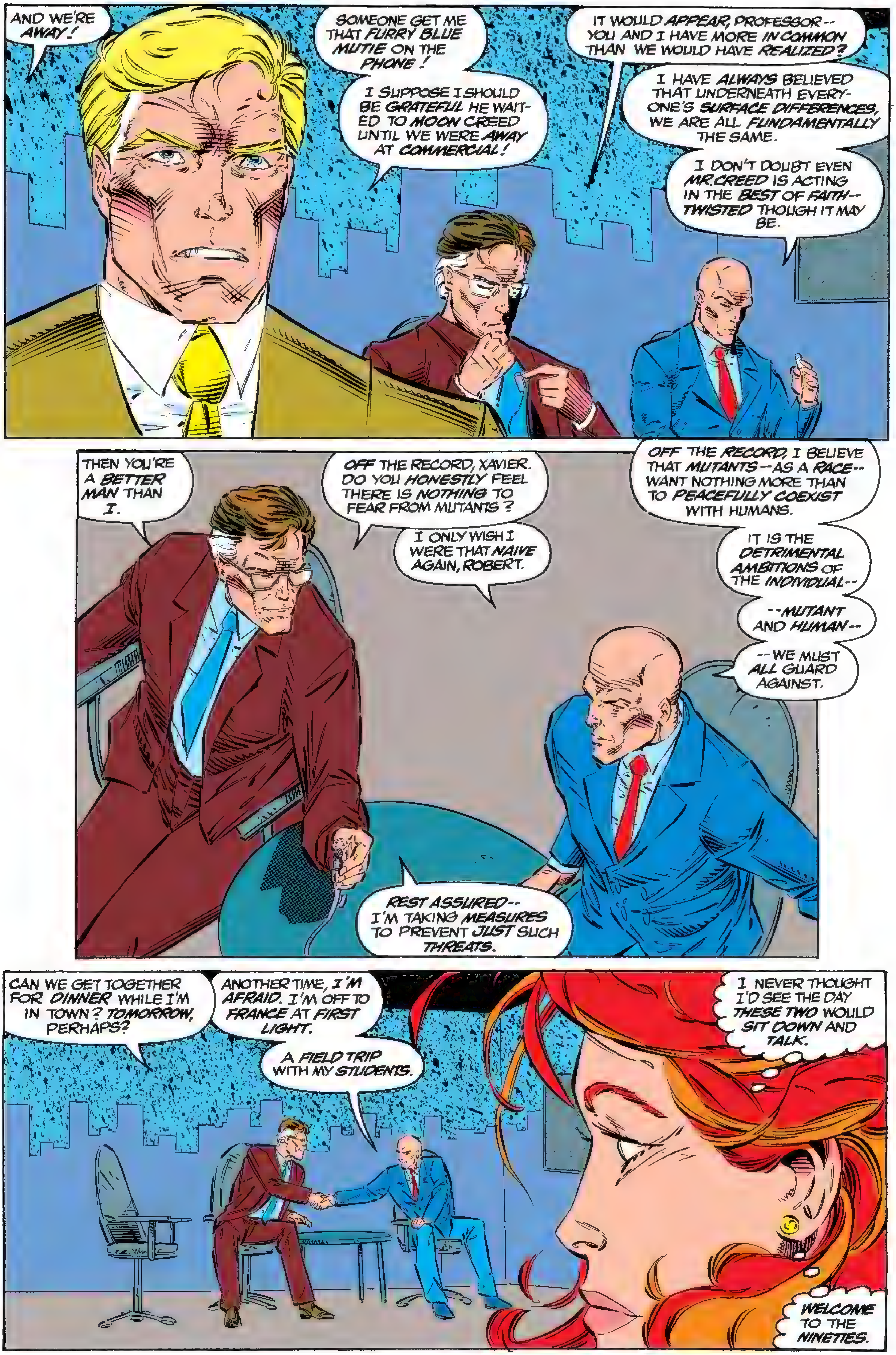

‹SNOWFLAKE, WHAT ARE YOU DOING UP AT THIS HOUR? IT IS LATE... AND I TUCKED YOU IN HOURS AGO.›*
‹I WAS ASLEEP, PIOTR... HONEST.›
‹BUT I HAD A DREAM... THAT I NEEDED YOU, AND YOU WERE NOT THERE!›
‹YOU HAD-- LEFT-- WITH MOMMA, POPPA AND MIKHAIL.›
‹THAT WILL NOT HAPPEN, ILLYANA. FOR WHAT'S THE USE OF HAVING A BIG BROTHER--›
‹--IF I'M NOT HERE TO ALWAYS PROTECT YOU?›
‹I KNOW I AM BEING--WHAT DID JUBILEE CALL IT--A "CHOWDER HEAD"...›
‹YOU'RE STILL FEVERISH. YOU SHOULD BE IN BED.›
‹BUT... I WANTED TO BE THE FIRST TO GIVE YOU THE PRESENT I MADE.›
‹MY ENGLISH IS NOT SO GOOD. I HOPE I SPELLED IT RIGHT.›
I LOVE PE
I LOVE PETER
‹YOU SPELLED IT EXACTLY RIGHT.›
‹NOW REST EASY, SISTER... KNOWING THAT NO MATTER WHAT, I WILL ALWAYS BE THERE FOR YOU.›
‹WE WILL BE THERE FOR EACH OTHER, PIOTR...›
‹...ALWAYS.›
* TRANSLATED FROM THE RUSSIAN. -- BOB

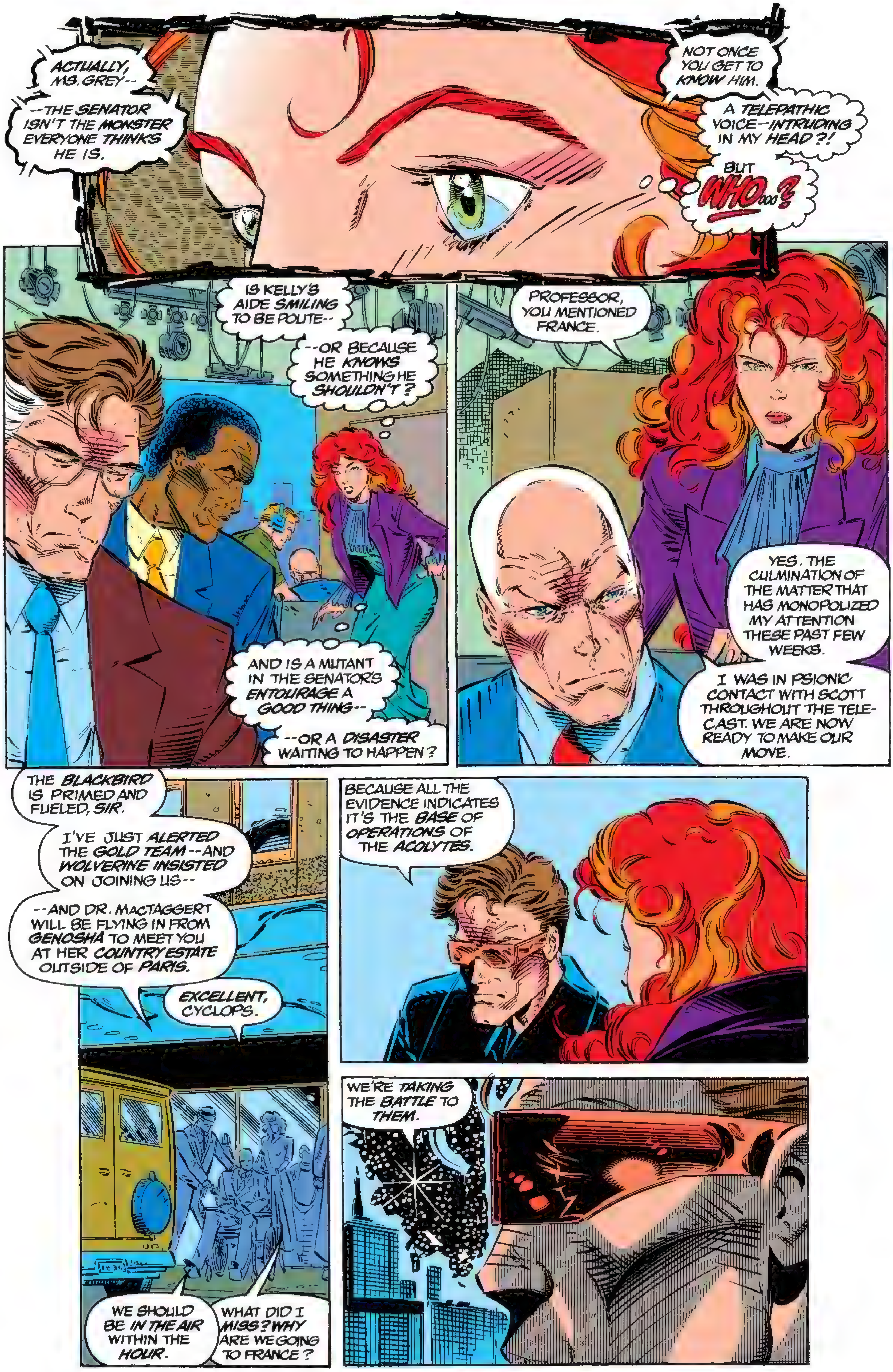

WHEN MOST PEOPLE HEAR THE WORD MUTANT, IT SUMMONS UP FEARFUL IMAGES OF BUG-EYED "FREAKS" AND MEGALOMANIACS DETERMINED TO RULE THE WORLD.
IT IS RARE, THEN, WHEN THAT OCCASIONAL HOMO SUPERIOR HAPPENS ALONG WHO MANAGES TO INGRATIATE HIMSELF TO THE ENTIRE NATION.
DR. HENRY McCOY-- KNOWN THROUGHOUT THE WORLD AS A FORMER AVENGER CALLED THE BEAST-- IS JUST SUCH A MUTANT.
ELTON, SENATOR, PROFESSOR-- GREETINGS.
AND A HEARTY "SIEG HEIL!" TO YOU, MR. CREED!
POKE FUN IF YOU'D LIKE, DR. McCOY, I'M--
--A RACIST?! IT WOULD TAKE A MORE IGNORANT MAN THAN ME TO ARGUE SUCH A POINT!
THOUGH I CONFESS I DIDN'T RECOGNIZE YOU SANS YOUR HOOD AND ROBES.
MIGHT I SUGGEST A LOGO?
A BURNING DNA SYMBOL, MAYHAP?
UM, DR. McCOY-- WOULD YOU SAY YOUR ACCEPTANCE INTO THE AVENGERS A FEW YEARS AGO WAS NOT INDICATIVE THAT THE GENERAL PUBLIC IS--
--CATCHING UP TO THE TWENTIETH CENTURY?! OH, MY STARS AND GARTERS, I HOPE SO!
BUT GOOD GOLLY, GOOD GOSH MR. AND MRS. AMERICA-- T'AINT NO BIG DEAL!
WHY STATISTICALLY SPEAKING--
--I BET IF YOU LOOKED CLOSE ENOUGH, SOME OF YOUR BEST FRIENDS ARE MUTANTS!


THAT'S EXACTLY MY POINT! MUTANTS ARE TRYING TO HIDE AMONG THE REST OF HUMANITY--
--DOING WHO KNOWS WHAT AMOUNT OF DAMAGE TO OUR GENE POOL?!
WOW. I NEVER THOUGHT OF IT THAT WAY.
HEAVEN FORBID WE ALL KEEP USING THE SAME WATER FOUNTAINS!
HERE'S AN IDEA-- WHY DON'T ALL US MUTANTS START WEARING SCARLET "M's" ON OUR CLOTHES?!
WAIT--I GOT IT...
...TATTOOS!
YOU CAN STENCIL TATTOOS ON OUR FOREARMS!
I REFUSE TO SIT HERE AND BE INSULTED BY THIS--THIS FREAK!
IF YOU'RE LEAVING ANYWAY, FORGIVE ME FOR FAST FOWARDING TO MY FINAL REBUTTAL AS I SAY--
--ON BEHALF OF MUTANTS EVERYWHERE...
PTHHHPHTH!
THANK YOU, ER... BEAST.
IT IS THIS FLAGRANT DISREGARD FO--
WE'LL CONCLUDE AFTER THESE MESSAGES...
Sigh


MEANWHILE AT HARRY'S HIDEAWAY...
HEE
HA HA
HO
HOO
HEH HEH
Harry's Hideaway
HA
HA
HO
HA
HO
HO
heh
HO
hee hee
OROR0, I'M NOT SURE I UNDERSTAND THE HUMOR BEHIND WHAT JUST OCCURRED.
JUDGING FROM THE EXPRESSION ON CHARLES' FACE--
--YOU ARE NOT ALONE.
EXACTLY WHAT IS THE SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE OF A "RASPBERRY"?
THERE IS NONE, BISHOP!
NONE HA HOO haah WHATSOEVER!
BOBBY'S RIGHT. IT'S HANK'S WAY OF UNDERMINING THE VALUE OF CREED'S SENTIMENT THROUGH RIDICULE.
WARREN, I'M NOT SURE ANTAGONIZING THE ENEMY IS SUCH A GOOD IDEA--
--ESPECIALLY ON NATIONAL TELEVISION.
I AM INCLINED TO AGREE WITH DETECTIVE JONES. TO UNDERESTIMATE AN...
...AN...
... ENEMY?
THIS... WHAT DID THE OTHERS CALL HER... WAITRESS--
--THERE IS SOMETHING... FAMILIAR ABOUT HER.
CAN I GET YOU ANYTHING ELSE, SIR?
ANOTHER DR. PEPPER?
YES. THANK YOU.


BUT I WON'T BE *BORN* IN THIS TIME-LINE FOR ANOTHER *SEVENTY YEARS*.
I CAN'T *POSSIBLY* KNOW HER. CAN I?
A *TOAST* THEN, TO PROFESSOR XAVIER'S NEW CAREER AS THE *MONTEL WILLIAMS* OF MUTANTDOM--
--AND THE BEAST'S ATTEMPT TO SINGLE-HANDEDLY SET THE *MUTANT MOVEMENT* BACK *THIRTY* YEARS!
ORORO...?
BOBBY, I DON'T MEAN TO PUT A DAMPER ON THE FESTIVITIES...
...BUT SOMEHOW I THINK IT IS FITTING WE RAISE A GLASS IN HONOR...
...TO *ALL* THOSE WHO HAVE *GONE BEFORE* US.
WHETHER THEY HAVE FOUGHT AT OUR SIDE-- SUCH AS *MIMIC, THUNDERBIRD, CYPHER, CABLE* OR *WARLOCK* TO NAME BUT A FEW--
--OR SUPPORTED US, AS DID *MARIKO YASHIDA* OR *SHARON FRIEDLANDER*.
TO OUR ADVERSARIES. *MAGNETO, THE HELLIONS,* THE *MARAUDERS*--FOR *MISSED OPPORTUNITIES* AND FOR THE GOOD THEY COULD HAVE DONE.
FINALLY, HERE *ALSO* TO THE *TIMES YET TO COME*.
TO THE *FUTURE*.
INDEED.
TO THE FUTURE.

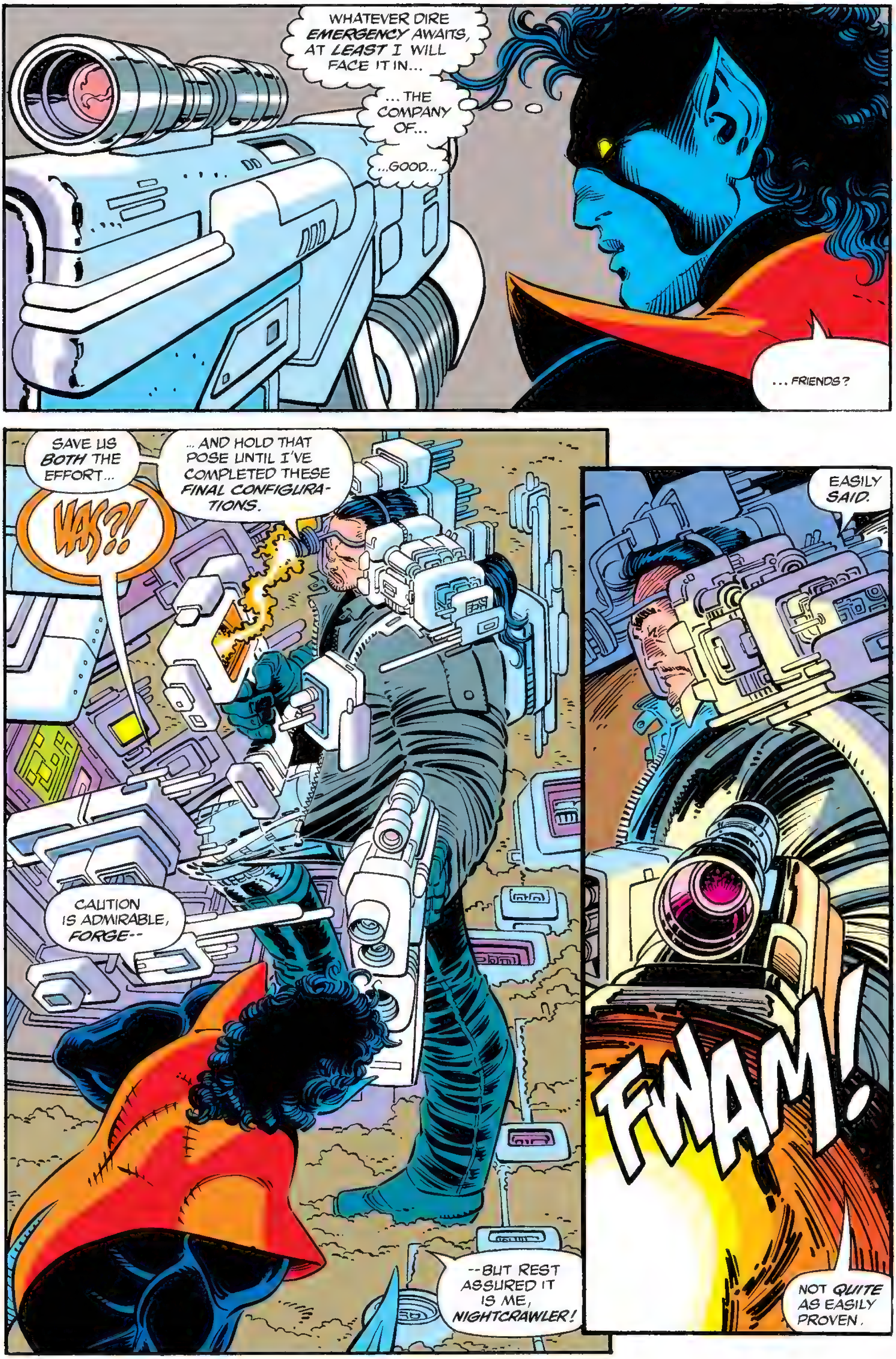

AND WE'RE AWAY!
SOMEONE GET ME THAT FURRY BLUE MUTIE ON THE PHONE!
I SUPPOSE I SHOULD BE GRATEFUL HE WAITED TO MOON CREED UNTIL WE WERE AWAY AT COMMERCIAL!
IT WOULD APPEAR, PROFESSOR-- YOU AND I HAVE MORE IN COMMON THAN WE WOULD HAVE REALIZED?
I HAVE ALWAYS BELIEVED THAT UNDERNEATH EVERYONE'S SURFACE DIFFERENCES, WE ARE ALL FUNDAMENTALLY THE SAME.
I DON'T DOUBT EVEN MR. CREED IS ACTING IN THE BEST OF FAITH-- TWISTED THOUGH IT MAY BE.
THEN YOU'RE A BETTER MAN THAN I.
OFF THE RECORD, XAVIER. DO YOU HONESTLY FEEL THERE IS NOTHING TO FEAR FROM MUTANTS?
I ONLY WISH I WERE THAT NAIVE AGAIN, ROBERT.
OFF THE RECORD, I BELIEVE THAT MUTANTS--AS A RACE-- WANT NOTHING MORE THAN TO PEACEFULLY COEXIST WITH HUMANS.
IT IS THE DETRIMENTAL AMBITIONS OF THE INDIVIDUAL--
--MUTANT AND HUMAN--
--WE MUST ALL GUARD AGAINST.
REST ASSURED-- I'M TAKING MEASURES TO PREVENT JUST SUCH THREATS.
CAN WE GET TOGETHER FOR DINNER WHILE I'M IN TOWN? TOMORROW, PERHAPS?
ANOTHER TIME, I'M AFRAID. I'M OFF TO FRANCE AT FIRST LIGHT.
A FIELD TRIP WITH MY STUDENTS.
I NEVER THOUGHT I'D SEE THE DAY THESE TWO WOULD SIT DOWN AND TALK.
WELCOME TO THE NINETIES.


ACTUALLY, MS. GREY--
--THE SENATOR ISN'T THE MONSTER EVERYONE THINKS HE IS.
NOT ONCE YOU GET TO KNOW HIM.
A TELEPATHIC VOICE--INTRUDING IN MY HEAD?!
BUT WHO...?
IS KELLY'S AIDE SMILING TO BE POLITE--
--OR BECAUSE HE KNOWS SOMETHING HE SHOULDN'T?
AND IS A MUTANT IN THE SENATOR'S ENTOURAGE A GOOD THING--
--OR A DISASTER WAITING TO HAPPEN?
PROFESSOR, YOU MENTIONED FRANCE.
YES. THE CULMINATION OF THE MATTER THAT HAS MONOPOLIZED MY ATTENTION THESE PAST FEW WEEKS.
I WAS IN PSIONIC CONTACT WITH SCOTT THROUGHOUT THE TELECAST. WE ARE NOW READY TO MAKE OUR MOVE.
THE BLACKBIRD IS PRIMED AND FUELED, SIR.
I'VE JUST ALERTED THE GOLD TEAM--AND WOLVERINE INSISTED ON JOINING US--
--AND DR. MACTAGGERT WILL BE FLYING IN FROM GENOSHA TO MEET YOU AT HER COUNTRY ESTATE OUTSIDE OF PARIS.
EXCELLENT, CYCLOPS.
WE SHOULD BE IN THE AIR WITHIN THE HOUR.
WHAT DID I MISS? WHY ARE WE GOING TO FRANCE?
BECAUSE ALL THE EVIDENCE INDICATES IT'S THE BASE OF OPERATIONS OF THE ACOLYTES.
WE'RE TAKING THE BATTLE TO THEM.

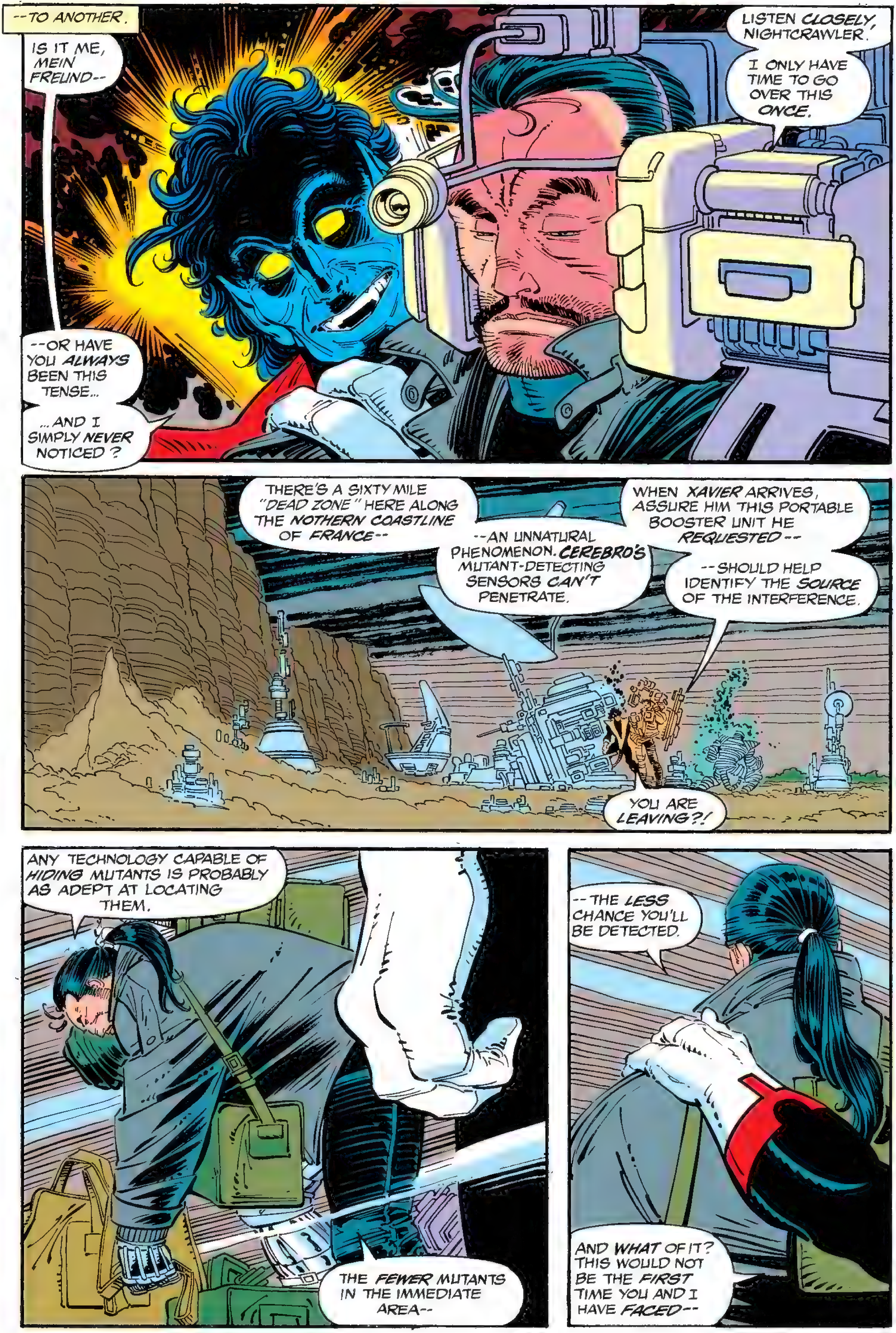
MARVEL COMICS
THE UNCANNY
X-MEN
AN X-MEN ANNIVERSARY SPECTACULAR!
300
MAY
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
30 YEARS
X MEN
1963-1993
JR JR + DG

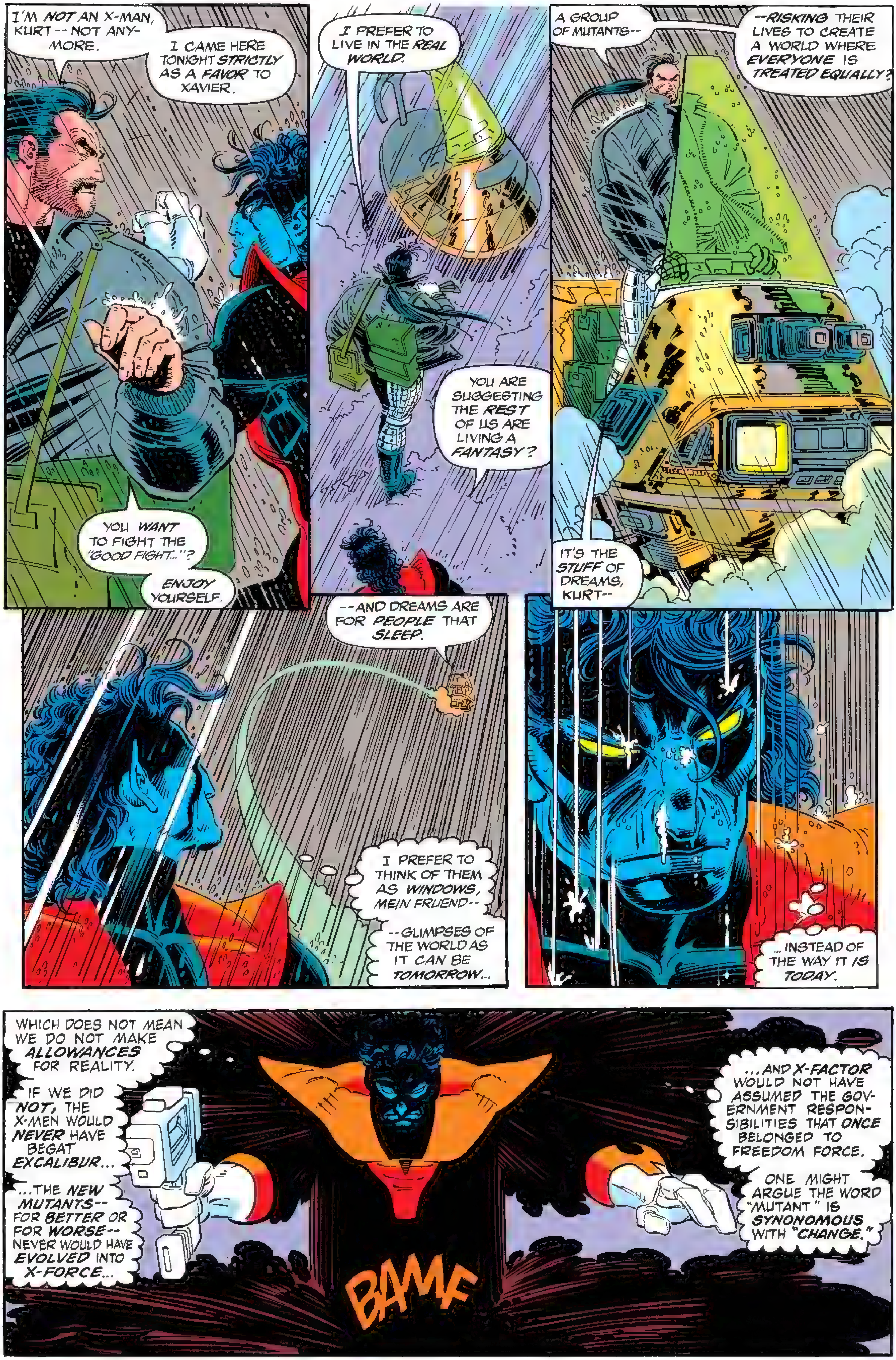
THE CALL WAS PLACED DIRECTLY TO THE CENTER OF HIS BRAIN.
"NIGHTCRAWLER! ALONE! NOW!"...
...FOLLOWED BY A SET OF COORDINATES.
I SUPPOSE I SHOULD BE ANNOYED AT THE PROFESSOR'S ASSUMPTION I WOULD DROP EVERYTHING--
--AS THOUGH I DO NOT HAVE MY OWN RESPONSIBILITIES AS LEADER OF EXCALIBUR.
AH, KURT WAGNER-- ;SIGH; --YOU ARE KIDDING YOURSELF.
ONCE AN X-MAN...
...ALWAYS AN X-MAN!

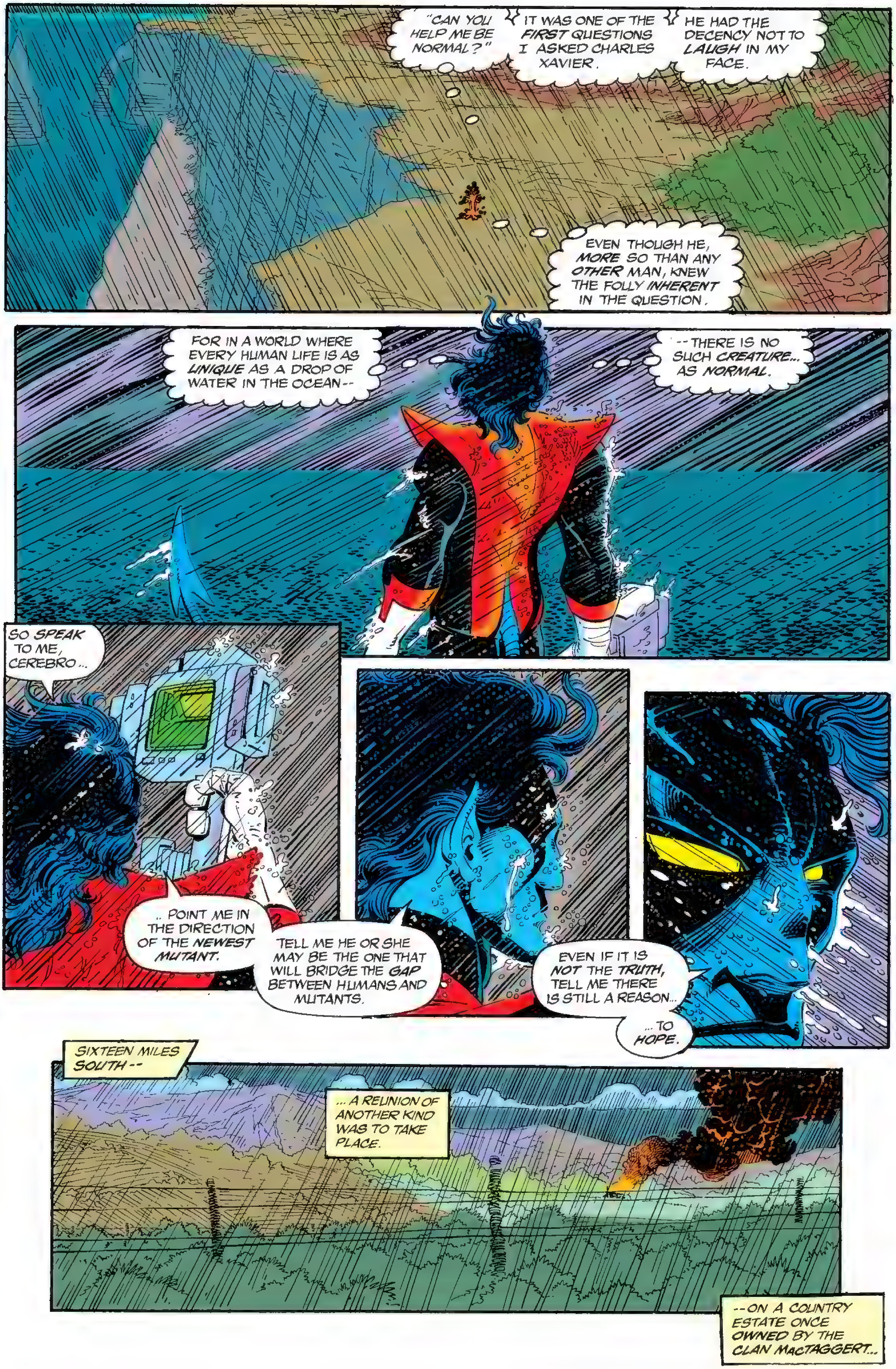
[redacted]

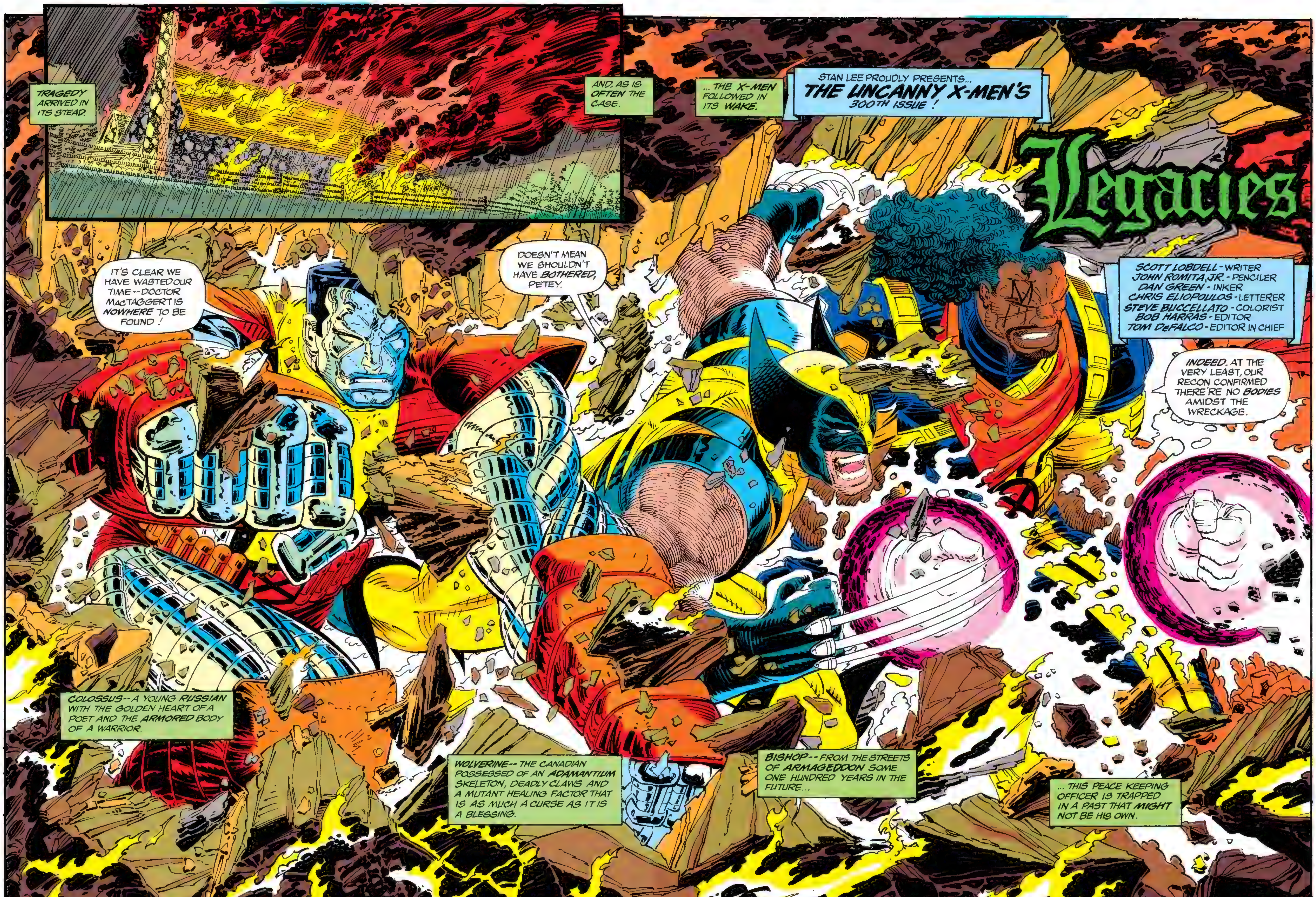

WHATEVER DIRE *EMERGENCY* AWAITS, AT *LEAST* I WILL FACE IT IN...
... THE COMPANY OF...
...GOOD...
... FRIENDS?
SAVE US *BOTH* THE EFFORT...
... AND HOLD THAT POSE UNTIL I'VE COMPLETED THESE *FINAL CONFIGURATIONS.*
WAS?!
CAUTION IS ADMIRABLE, *FORGE*--
--BUT REST ASSURED IT IS ME, *NIGHTCRAWLER!*
EASILY *SAID.*
FWAM!
NOT *QUITE* AS EASILY PROVEN.

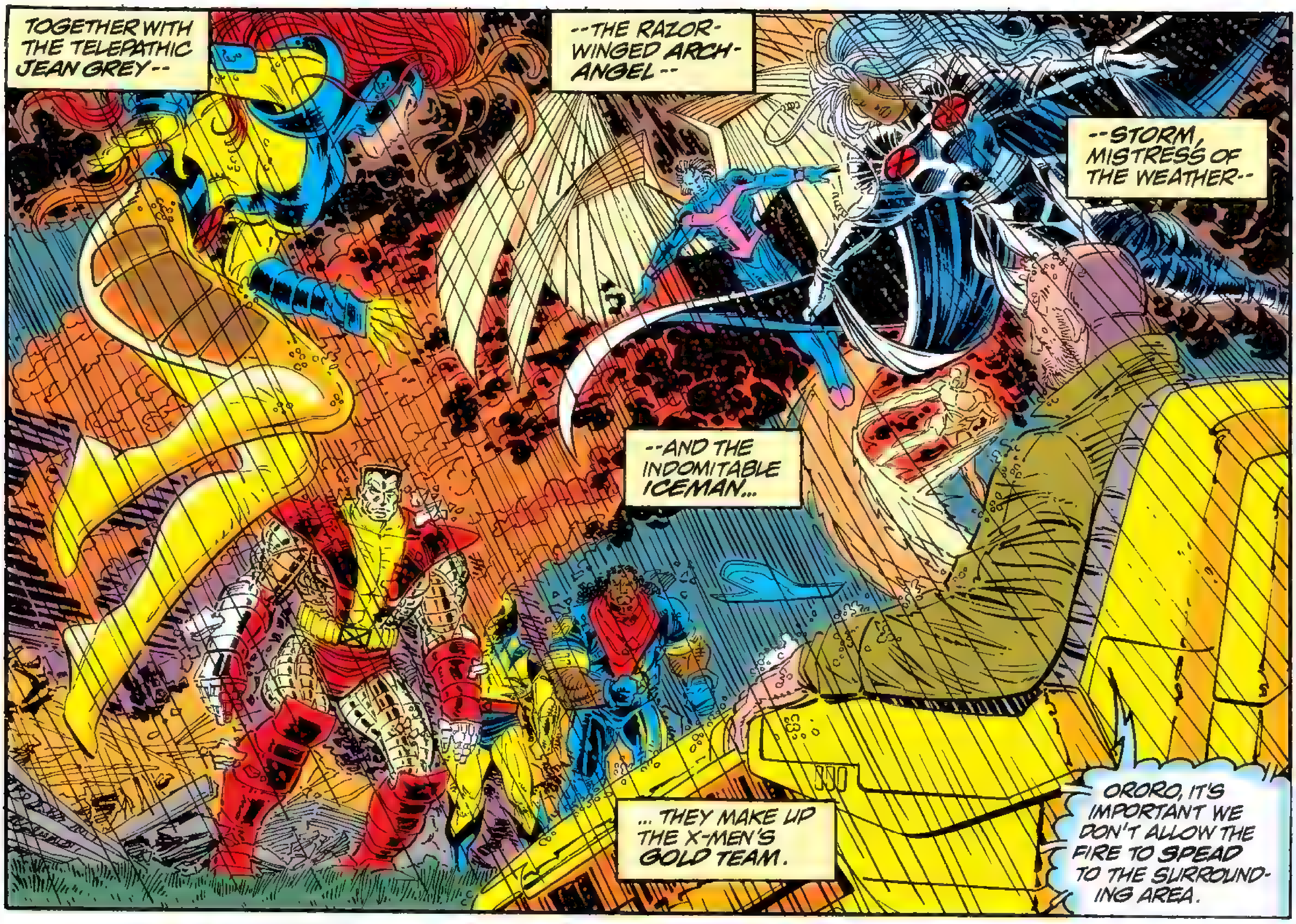
THE *MUTANT* CALLED FORGE WAS BORN A **CREATOR**, BLESSED WITH AN INVENTIVE ABILITY THAT GOES FAR, FAR BEYOND THAT OF GENIUS.
IN *THIS* CASE, HE HAS CREATED A CONTAINMENT GUN CAPABLE OF ENVELOPING A TARGET IN A ***RESTRAINT COCOON.***
FORTUNATELY, FOR NIGHTCRAWLER--
--HE IS NOT WITHOUT HIS *OWN* GENETIC ATTRIBUTES.
THE CRACKLE OF FLAME, A BURST OF BRIMSTONE--
BAMF!
--A SUDDEN *IMPLOSION* OF AIR RUSHING IN TO FILL THE *VOID*...
... ARE ALL *MANIFESTATIONS* OF HIS ABILITY TO *TELEPORT* FROM *ONE* PLACE--

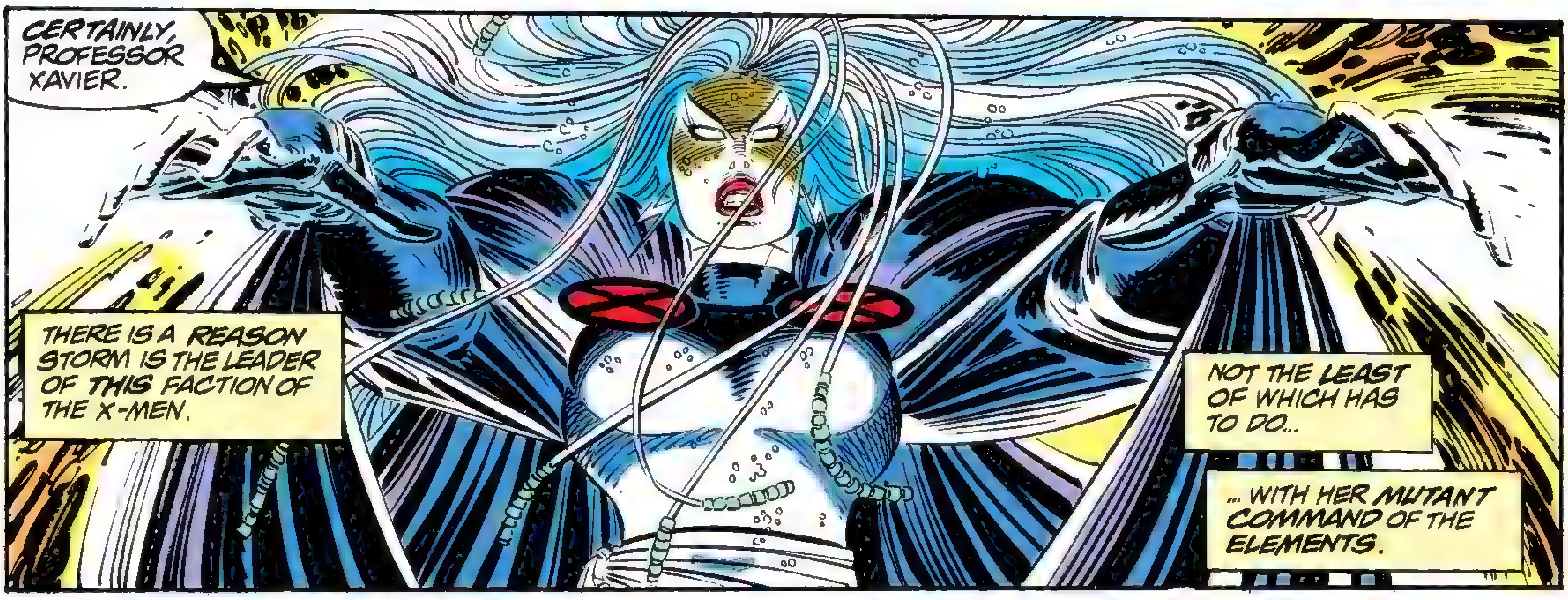

--TO ANOTHER.
IS IT ME, MEIN FREUND--
--OR HAVE YOU *ALWAYS* BEEN THIS TENSE...
...AND I SIMPLY *NEVER* NOTICED?
LISTEN *CLOSELY*, NIGHTCRAWLER.
I ONLY HAVE TIME TO GO OVER THIS *ONCE*.
THERE'S A SIXTY MILE "*DEAD ZONE*" HERE ALONG THE *NOTHERN COASTLINE* OF *FRANCE*--
--AN UNNATURAL PHENOMENON. *CEREBRO'S* MUTANT-DETECTING SENSORS *CAN'T* PENETRATE.
WHEN *XAVIER* ARRIVES, ASSURE HIM THIS PORTABLE BOOSTER UNIT HE *REQUESTED*--
--SHOULD HELP IDENTIFY THE *SOURCE* OF THE INTERFERENCE.
YOU ARE *LEAVING*?!
ANY TECHNOLOGY CAPABLE OF *HIDING* MUTANTS IS PROBABLY AS ADEPT AT LOCATING THEM.
THE *FEWER* MUTANTS IN THE IMMEDIATE AREA--
--THE *LESS* CHANCE YOU'LL BE DETECTED.
AND *WHAT* OF IT? THIS WOULD NOT BE THE *FIRST* TIME YOU AND I HAVE *FACED*--

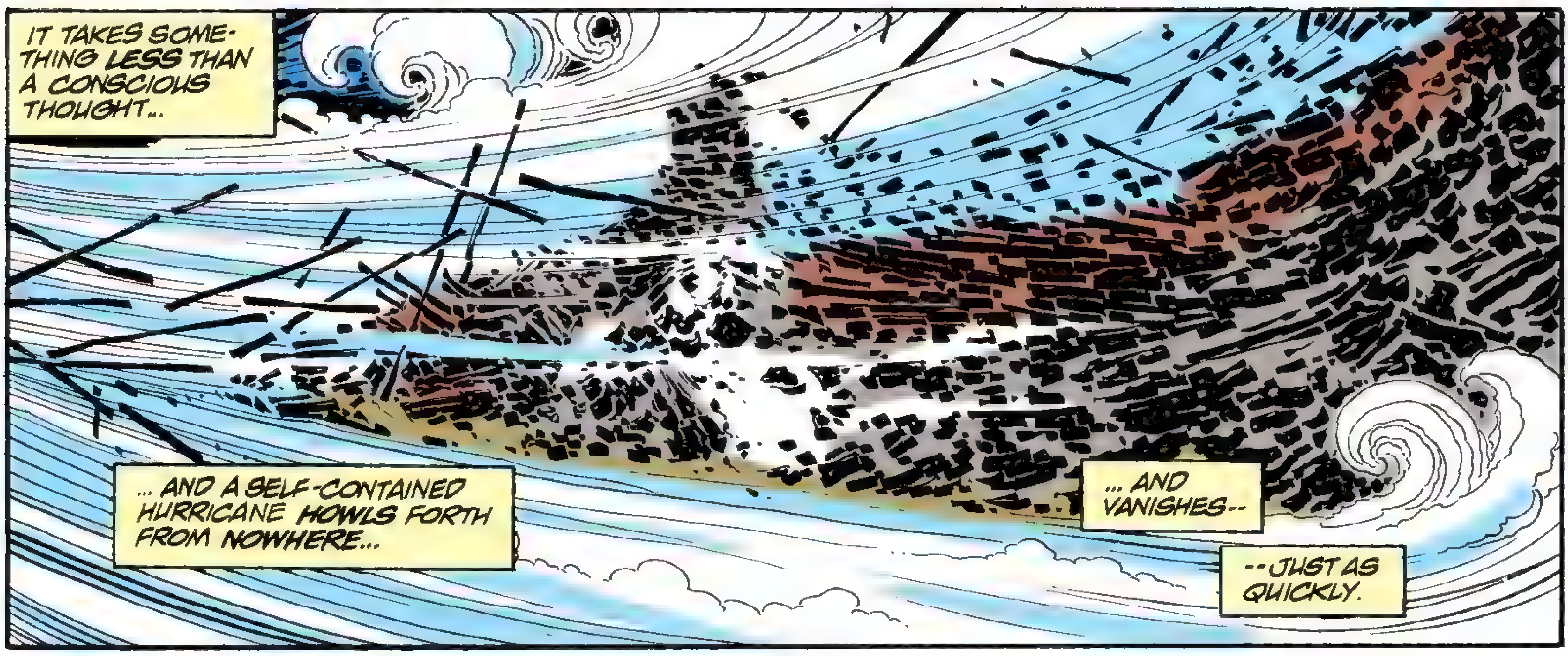

I'M *NOT* AN X-MAN, KURT -- NOT ANYMORE.
I CAME HERE TONIGHT *STRICTLY* AS A *FAVOR* TO XAVIER.
YOU *WANT* TO FIGHT THE "GOOD FIGHT..."?
ENJOY YOURSELF.
I PREFER TO LIVE IN THE *REAL* WORLD.
YOU ARE SUGGESTING THE *REST* OF US ARE LIVING A *FANTASY*?
A GROUP OF MUTANTS--
--*RISKING* THEIR LIVES TO CREATE A WORLD WHERE *EVERYONE* IS *TREATED EQUALLY*?
IT'S THE *STUFF* OF DREAMS, KURT--
--AND DREAMS ARE FOR *PEOPLE* THAT *SLEEP*.
I PREFER TO THINK OF THEM AS *WINDOWS*, *MEIN FREUND*--
--GLIMPSES OF THE WORLD AS IT *CAN* BE *TOMORROW*...
...INSTEAD OF THE WAY IT *IS TODAY*.
WHICH DOES NOT MEAN WE DO NOT MAKE *ALLOWANCES* FOR REALITY.
IF WE DID *NOT*, THE X-MEN WOULD *NEVER* HAVE BEGAT *EXCALIBUR*...
...THE *NEW MUTANTS*-- FOR *BETTER* OR FOR *WORSE*-- NEVER WOULD HAVE *EVOLVED* INTO *X-FORCE*...
...AND *X-FACTOR* WOULD NOT HAVE ASSUMED THE GOVERNMENT RESPONSIBILITIES THAT *ONCE* BELONGED TO FREEDOM FORCE.
ONE MIGHT ARGUE THE WORD "MUTANT" IS *SYNONOMOUS* WITH "*CHANGE*."
BAMF

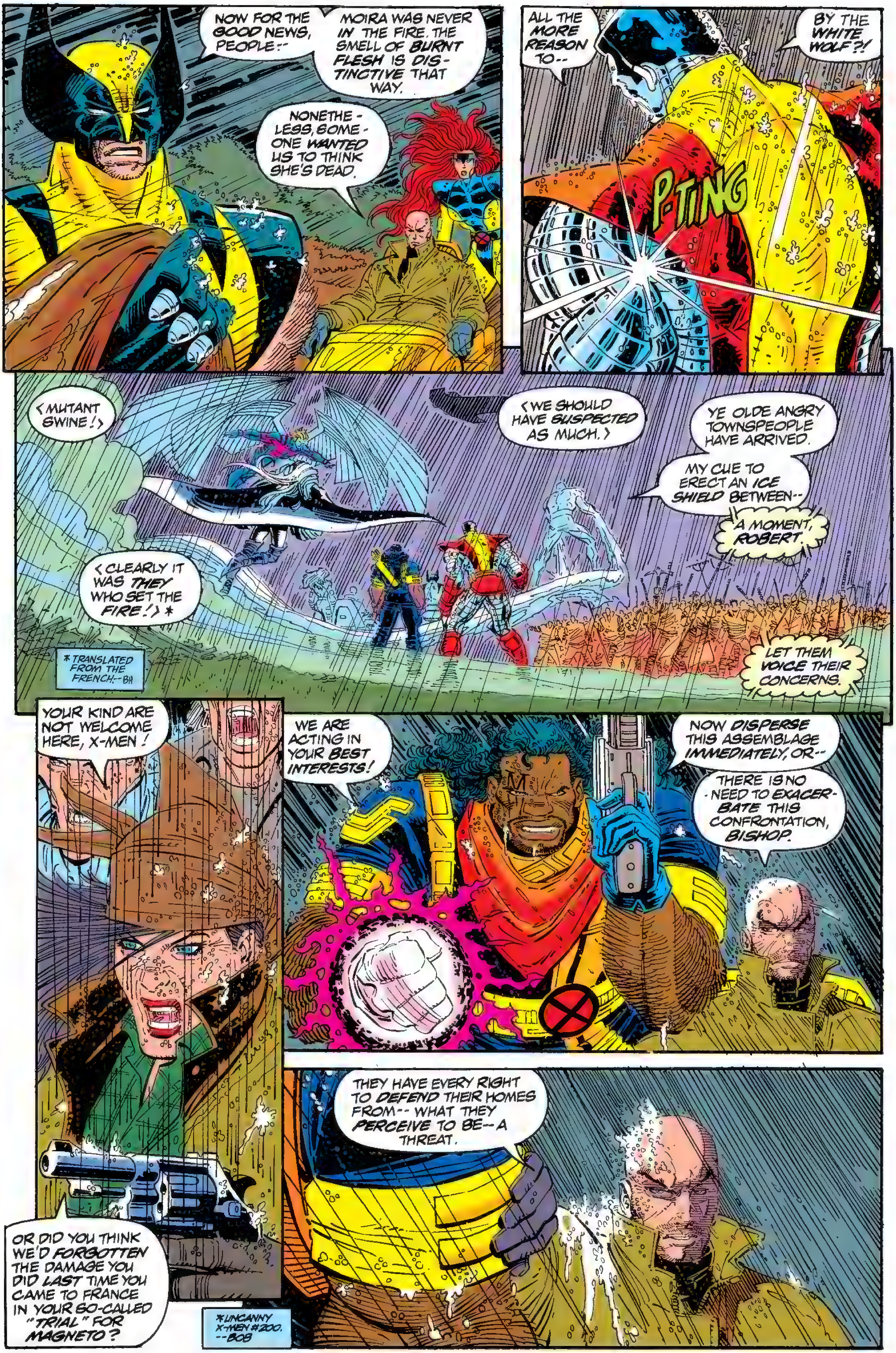

"CAN YOU HELP ME BE NORMAL?"
IT WAS ONE OF THE *FIRST* QUESTIONS I ASKED CHARLES XAVIER.
HE HAD THE DECENCY NOT TO *LAUGH* IN MY FACE.
EVEN THOUGH HE, *MORE* SO THAN ANY *OTHER* MAN, KNEW THE FOLLY *INHERENT* IN THE QUESTION.
FOR IN A WORLD WHERE EVERY HUMAN LIFE IS AS *UNIQUE* AS A DROP OF WATER IN THE OCEAN--
--THERE IS NO SUCH *CREATURE*... AS *NORMAL*.
SO *SPEAK* TO ME, CEREBRO...
..POINT ME IN THE DIRECTION OF THE *NEWEST MUTANT*.
TELL ME HE OR SHE MAY BE THE ONE THAT WILL BRIDGE THE *GAP* BETWEEN HUMANS AND MUTANTS.
EVEN IF IT IS *NOT* THE *TRUTH*, TELL ME THERE IS STILL A REASON...
...TO *HOPE*.
SIXTEEN MILES SOUTH--
...A REUNION OF ANOTHER KIND WAS TO TAKE PLACE.
--ON A COUNTRY ESTATE ONCE *OWNED* BY THE *CLAN MacTAGGERT*...

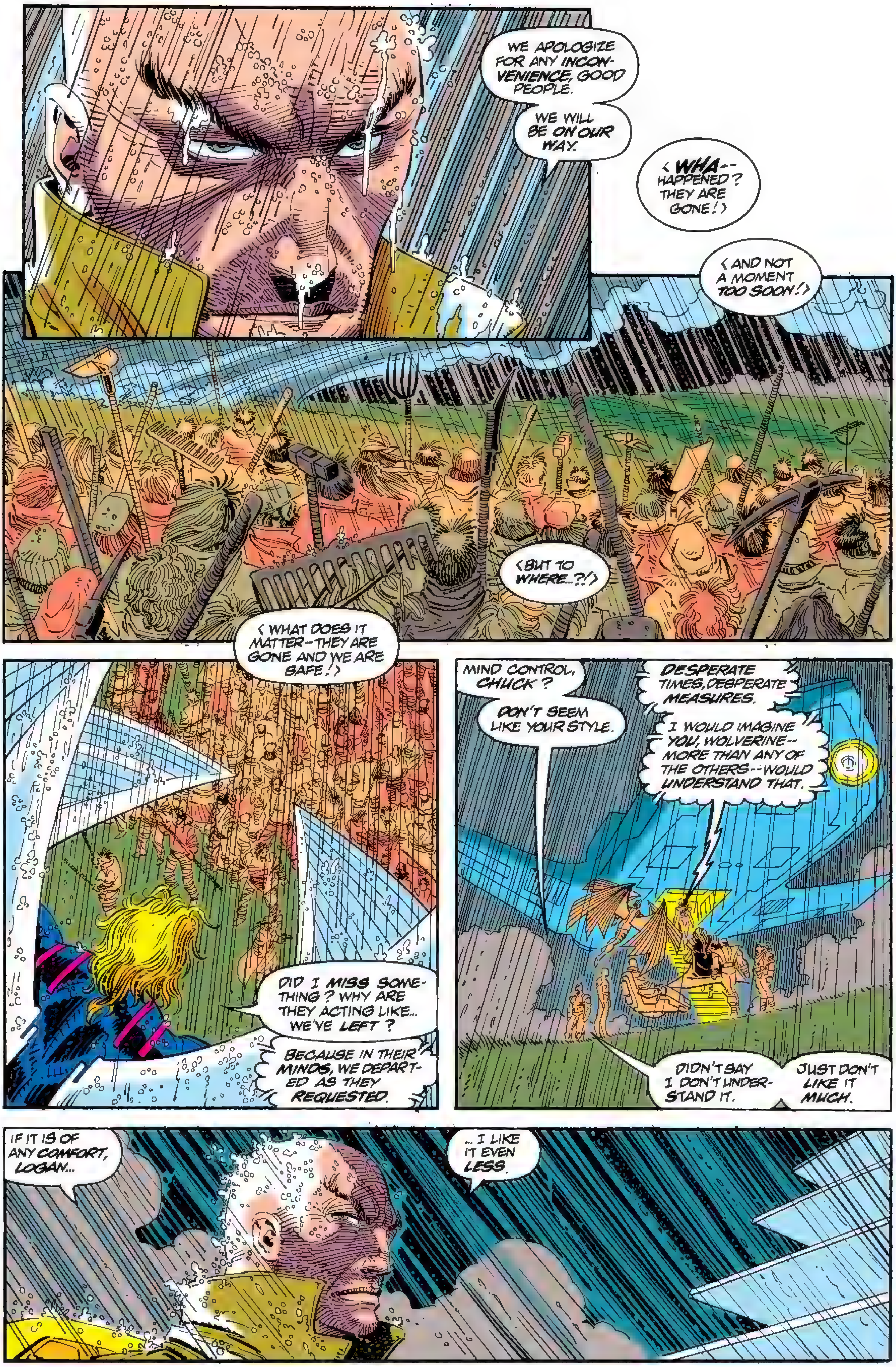

TRAGEDY ARRIVED IN ITS STEAD.
AND, AS IS OFTEN THE CASE.
... THE X-MEN FOLLOWED IN ITS WAKE.
STAN LEE PROUDLY PRESENTS... THE UNCANNY X-MEN'S 300TH ISSUE !
Legacies
SCOTT LOBDELL - WRITER
JOHN ROMITA, JR. - PENCILER
DAN GREEN - INKER
CHRIS ELIOPOULOS - LETTERER
STEVE BUCCELLATO - COLORIST
BOB HARRAS - EDITOR
TOM DeFALCO - EDITOR IN CHIEF
IT'S CLEAR WE HAVE WASTED OUR TIME -- DOCTOR MacTAGGERT IS NOWHERE TO BE FOUND !
DOESN'T MEAN WE SHOULDN'T HAVE BOTHERED, PETEY.
INDEED. AT THE VERY LEAST, OUR RECON CONFIRMED THERE'RE NO BODIES AMIDST THE WRECKAGE.
COLOSSUS -- A YOUNG RUSSIAN WITH THE GOLDEN HEART OF A POET AND THE ARMORED BODY OF A WARRIOR.
WOLVERINE -- THE CANADIAN POSSESSED OF AN ADAMANTIUM SKELETON, DEADLY CLAWS AND A MUTANT HEALING FACTOR THAT IS AS MUCH A CURSE AS IT IS A BLESSING.
BISHOP -- FROM THE STREETS OF ARMAGEDDON SOME ONE HUNDRED YEARS IN THE FUTURE...
... THIS PEACE KEEPING OFFICER IS TRAPPED IN A PAST THAT MIGHT NOT BE HIS OWN.

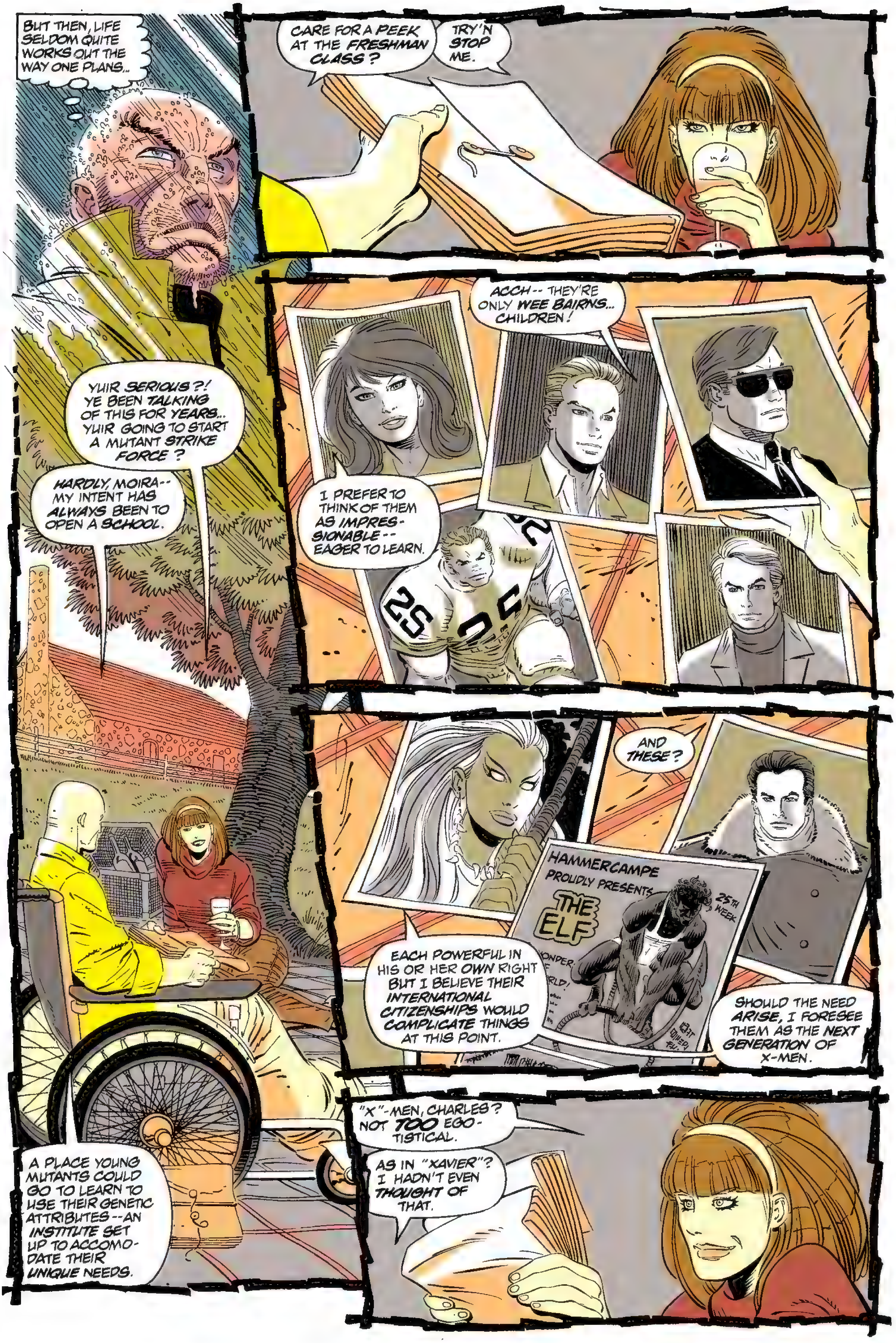

TOGETHER WITH THE TELEPATHIC JEAN GREY--
--THE RAZOR-WINGED ARCHANGEL--
--STORM, MISTRESS OF THE WEATHER--
--AND THE INDOMITABLE ICEMAN...
... THEY MAKE UP THE X-MEN'S GOLD TEAM.
ORORO, IT'S IMPORTANT WE DON'T ALLOW THE FIRE TO SPEAD TO THE SURROUNDING AREA.


CERTAINLY, PROFESSOR XAVIER.
THERE IS A REASON STORM IS THE LEADER OF THIS FACTION OF THE X-MEN.
NOT THE LEAST OF WHICH HAS TO DO...
... WITH HER MUTANT COMMAND OF THE ELEMENTS.


IT TAKES SOMETHING LESS THAN A CONSCIOUS THOUGHT...
... AND A SELF-CONTAINED HURRICANE HOWLS FORTH FROM NOWHERE...
... AND VANISHES--
--JUST AS QUICKLY.


NOW FOR THE GOOD NEWS, PEOPLE:--
MOIRA WAS NEVER IN THE FIRE. THE SMELL OF BURNT FLESH IS DISTINCTIVE THAT WAY.
NONETHELESS, SOMEONE WANTED US TO THINK SHE'S DEAD.
ALL THE MORE REASON TO--
BY THE WHITE WOLF?!
P-TING
<MUTANT SWINE!>
<WE SHOULD HAVE SUSPECTED AS MUCH.>
YE OLDE ANGRY TOWNSPEOPLE HAVE ARRIVED.
MY CUE TO ERECT AN ICE SHIELD BETWEEN--
A MOMENT, ROBERT.
<CLEARLY IT WAS THEY WHO SET THE FIRE!> *
*TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH.--BH
LET THEM VOICE THEIR CONCERNS.
YOUR KIND ARE NOT WELCOME HERE, X-MEN!
WE ARE ACTING IN YOUR BEST INTERESTS!
NOW DISPERSE THIS ASSEMBLAGE IMMEDIATELY, OR--
THERE IS NO NEED TO EXACERBATE THIS CONFRONTATION, BISHOP.
THEY HAVE EVERY RIGHT TO DEFEND THEIR HOMES FROM-- WHAT THEY PERCEIVE TO BE-- A THREAT.
OR DID YOU THINK WE'D FORGOTTEN THE DAMAGE YOU DID LAST TIME YOU CAME TO FRANCE IN YOUR SO-CALLED "TRIAL" FOR MAGNETO? *
*UNCANNY X-MEN #200. --BOB


WE APOLOGIZE FOR ANY INCONVENIENCE, GOOD PEOPLE.
WE WILL BE ON OUR WAY.
<WHA-- HAPPENED? THEY ARE GONE!>
<AND NOT A MOMENT TOO SOON!>
<BUT TO WHERE..?!>
<WHAT DOES IT MATTER--THEY ARE GONE AND WE ARE SAFE!>
DID I MISS SOMETHING? WHY ARE THEY ACTING LIKE.. WE'VE LEFT?
BECAUSE IN THEIR MINDS, WE DEPARTED AS THEY REQUESTED.
MIND CONTROL, CHUCK?
DON'T SEEM LIKE YOUR STYLE.
DESPERATE TIMES, DESPERATE MEASURES.
I WOULD IMAGINE YOU, WOLVERINE-- MORE THAN ANY OF THE OTHERS--WOULD UNDERSTAND THAT.
DIDN'T SAY I DON'T UNDERSTAND IT.
JUST DON'T LIKE IT MUCH.
IF IT IS OF ANY COMFORT, LOGAN...
...I LIKE IT EVEN LESS.


BUT THEN, LIFE SELDOM QUITE WORKS OUT THE WAY ONE PLANS...
CARE FOR A PEEK AT THE FRESHMAN CLASS?
TRY'N STOP ME.
ACCH -- THEY'RE ONLY WEE BAIRNS... CHILDREN!
I PREFER TO THINK OF THEM AS IMPRESSIONABLE -- EAGER TO LEARN.
25
AND THESE?
HAMMERCAMPE PROUDLY PRESENTS THE ELF
25TH WEEK
EACH POWERFUL IN HIS OR HER OWN RIGHT BUT I BELIEVE THEIR INTERNATIONAL CITIZENSHIPS WOULD COMPLICATE THINGS AT THIS POINT.
SHOULD THE NEED ARISE, I FORESEE THEM AS THE NEXT GENERATION OF X-MEN.
YUIR SERIOUS?! YE BEEN TALKING OF THIS FOR YEARS... YUIR GOING TO START A MUTANT STRIKE FORCE?
HARDLY, MOIRA -- MY INTENT HAS ALWAYS BEEN TO OPEN A SCHOOL.
A PLACE YOUNG MUTANTS COULD GO TO LEARN TO USE THEIR GENETIC ATTRIBUTES -- AN INSTITUTE SET UP TO ACCOMODATE THEIR UNIQUE NEEDS.
"X"-MEN, CHARLES? NOT TOO EGOTISTICAL.
AS IN "XAVIER"? I HADN'T EVEN THOUGHT OF THAT.

IT STANDS FOR SOMETHING EXTRA IN THEIR GENES, THE X-FACTOR WHICH SEPARATES HUMANS FROM MUTANTS.
THEN LET'S BE PRAYING THESE CHILDREN HAVE THAT SOMETHING EXTRA--
--'CAUSE IF INTERPOL IS TO BE BELIEVED, THEY'RE GOING TO BE NEEDING IT SOONER THAN LATER.
THIS CAME OVER THE WIRE AN HOUR AGO.
HE'S... BACK?
WORSE'N BACK. HE'S PLOTTING SOMETHING AS WELL.
HE WAS AFTER THE SECURITY PARAMETER FOR CAPE CITADEL.
CAN YE IMAGINE, THE WORLD'S NUCLEAR ARSENAL IN THE HANDS OF--
--MAGNUS.
MAGNUS!!!
MAG
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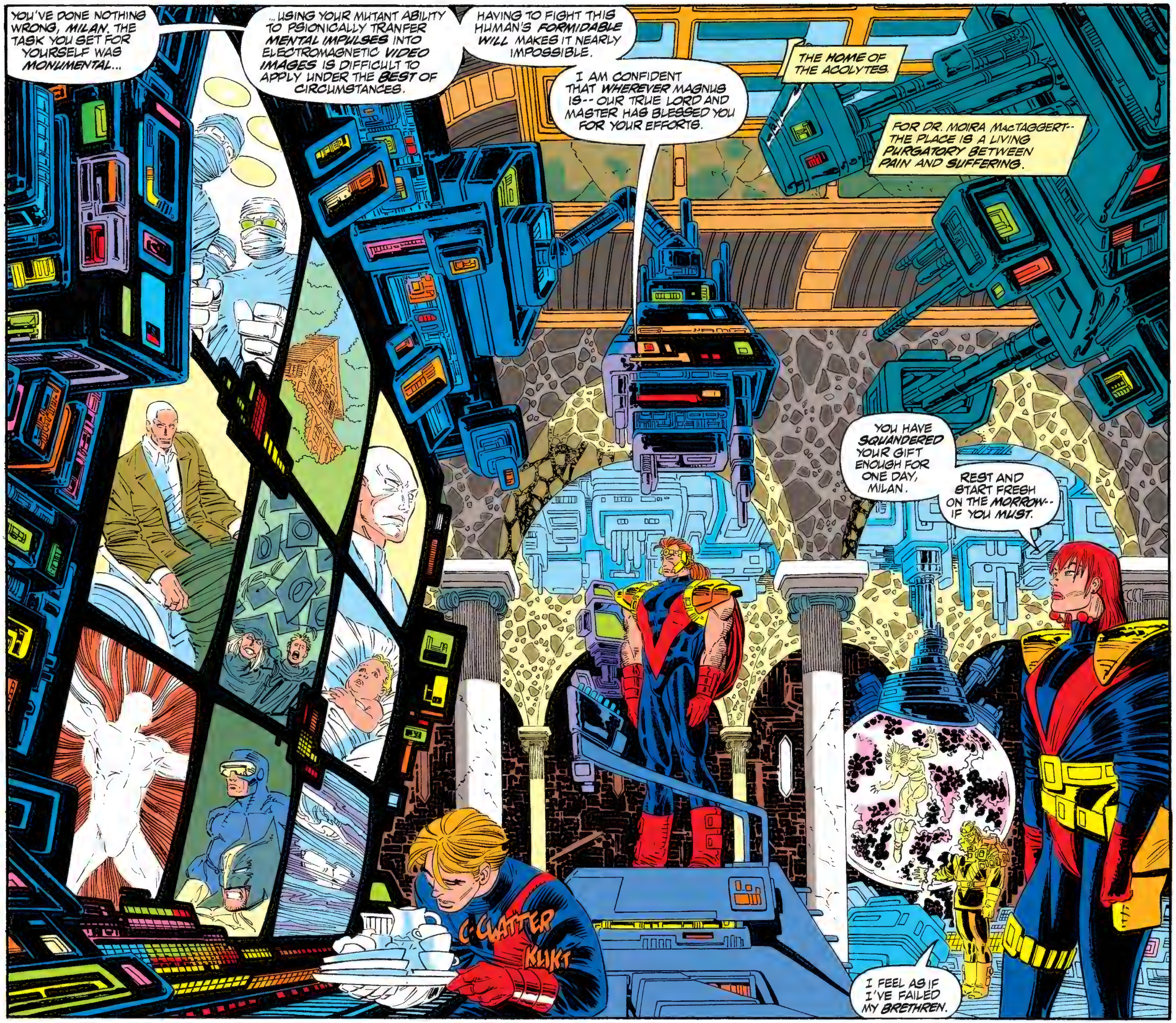
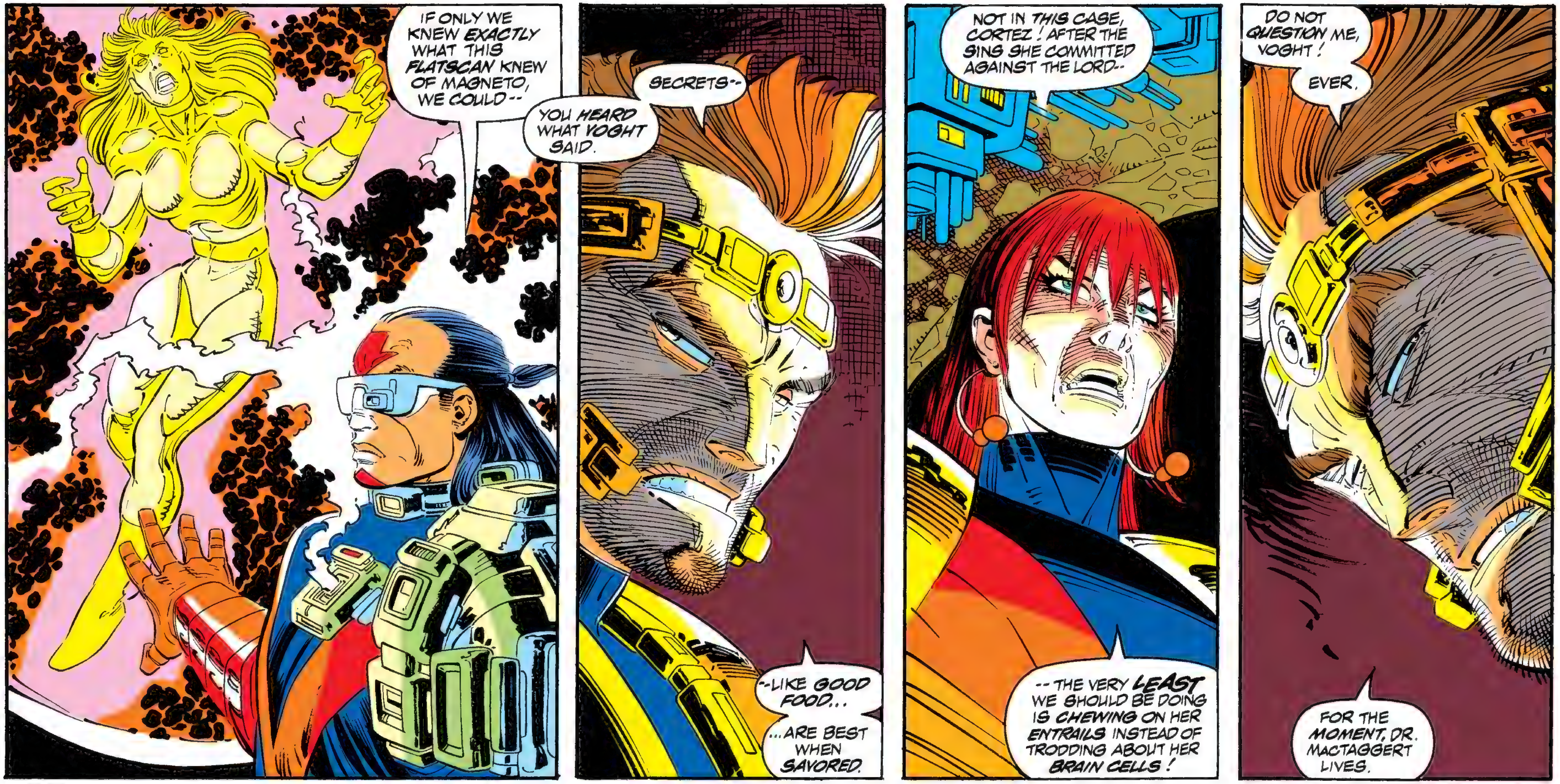
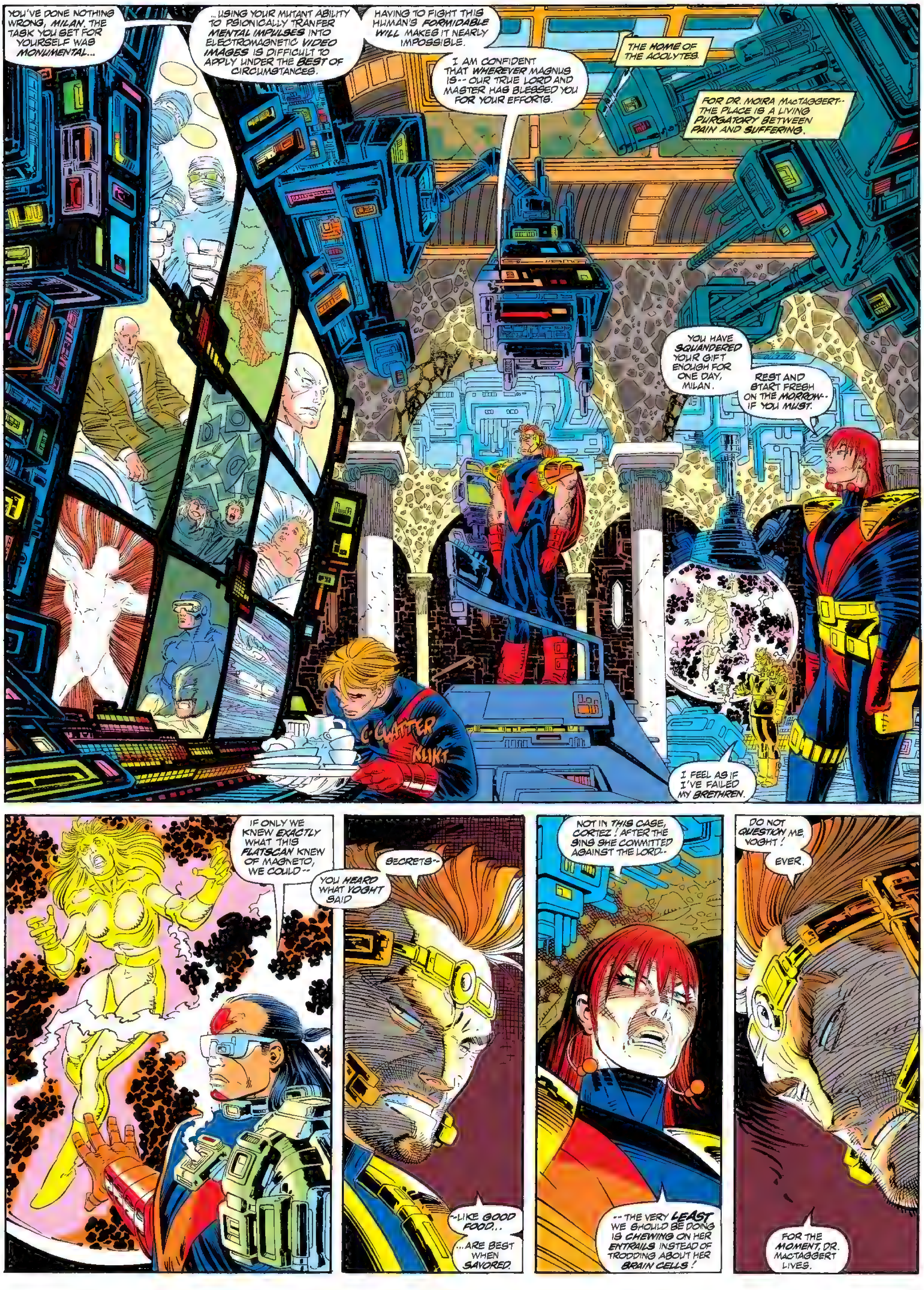
MAG
MAG
MAG
I AM SORRY, LORD CORTEZ...
... I AM LOSING THE TRANSMISSION.


YOU'VE DONE NOTHING WRONG, MILAN. THE TASK YOU SET FOR YOURSELF WAS MONUMENTAL...
...USING YOUR MUTANT ABILITY TO PSIONICALLY TRANFER MENTAL IMPULSES INTO ELECTROMAGNETIC VIDEO IMAGES IS DIFFICULT TO APPLY UNDER THE BEST OF CIRCUMSTANCES.
HAVING TO FIGHT THIS HUMAN'S FORMIDABLE WILL MAKES IT NEARLY IMPOSSIBLE.
I AM CONFIDENT THAT WHEREVER MAGNUS IS-- OUR TRUE LORD AND MASTER HAS BLESSED YOU FOR YOUR EFFORTS.
THE HOME OF THE ACOLYTES.
FOR DR. MOIRA MacTAGGERT-- THE PLACE IS A LIVING PURGATORY BETWEEN PAIN AND SUFFERING.
YOU HAVE SQUANDERED YOUR GIFT ENOUGH FOR ONE DAY, MILAN.
REST AND START FRESH ON THE MORROW-- IF YOU MUST.
C-CLATTER
KLIKt
I FEEL AS IF I'VE FAILED MY BRETHREN.


IF ONLY WE KNEW *EXACTLY* WHAT THIS *FLATSCAN* KNEW OF MAGNETO, WE COULD--
YOU *HEARD* WHAT *VOGHT* SAID.
SECRETS--
--LIKE *GOOD FOOD*...
...ARE BEST WHEN *SAVORED*.
NOT IN *THIS* CASE, CORTEZ! AFTER THE SINS SHE COMMITTED AGAINST THE LORD--
--THE VERY *LEAST* WE SHOULD BE DOING IS *CHEWING* ON HER *ENTRAILS* INSTEAD OF TRODDING ABOUT HER *BRAIN CELLS*!
DO NOT *QUESTION* ME, VOGHT!
EVER.
FOR THE *MOMENT*, DR. MACTAGGERT LIVES.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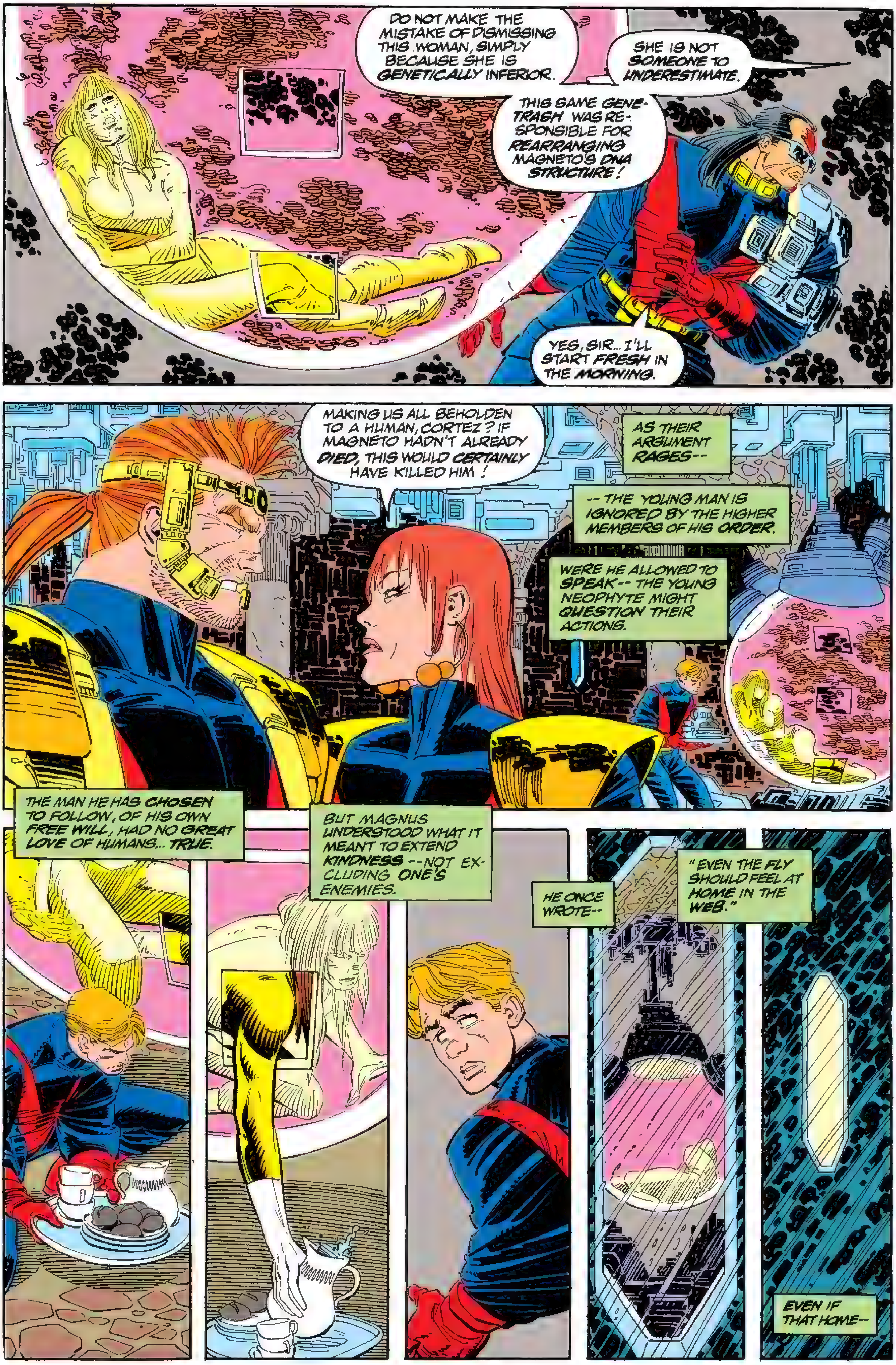
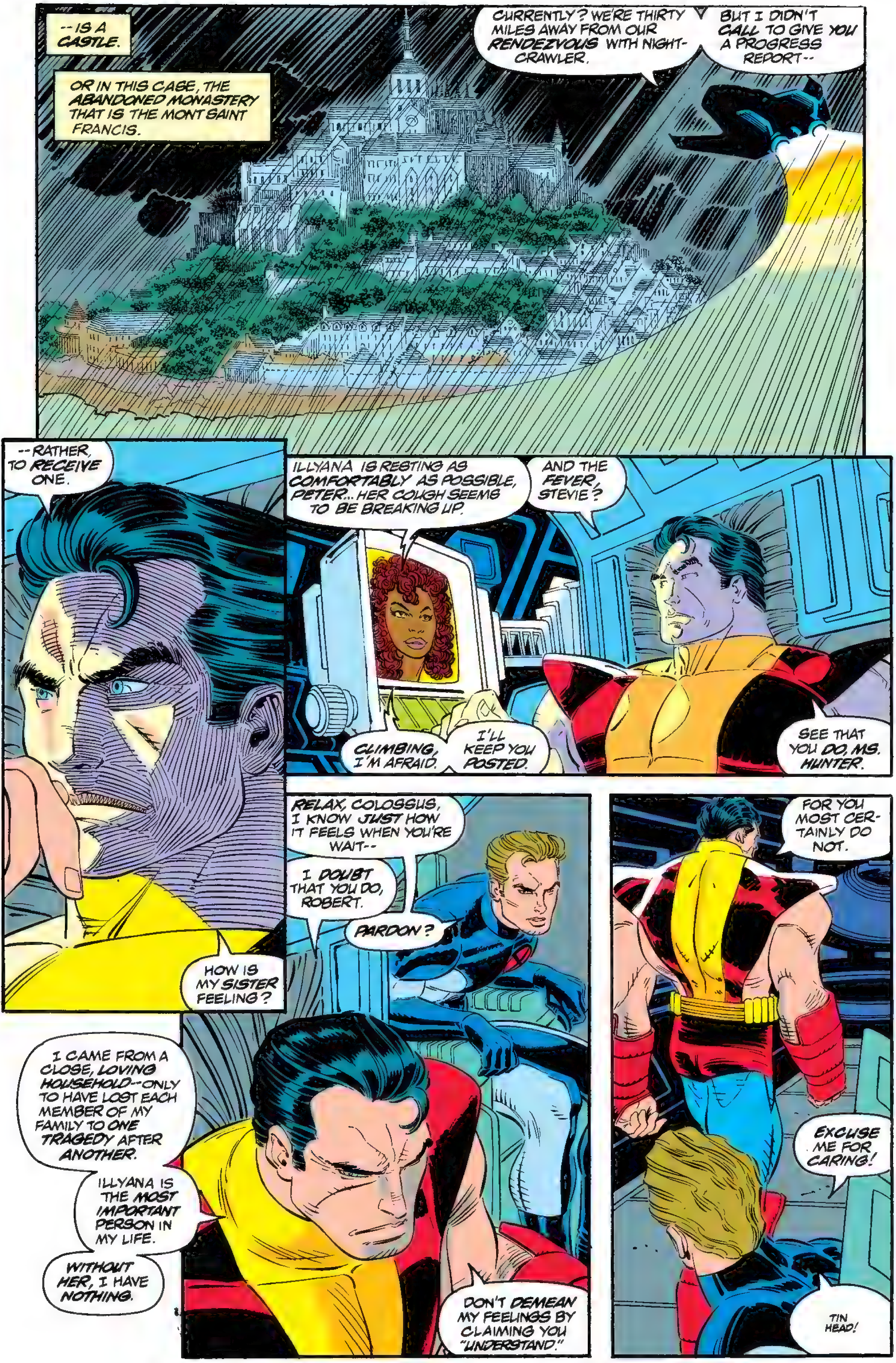
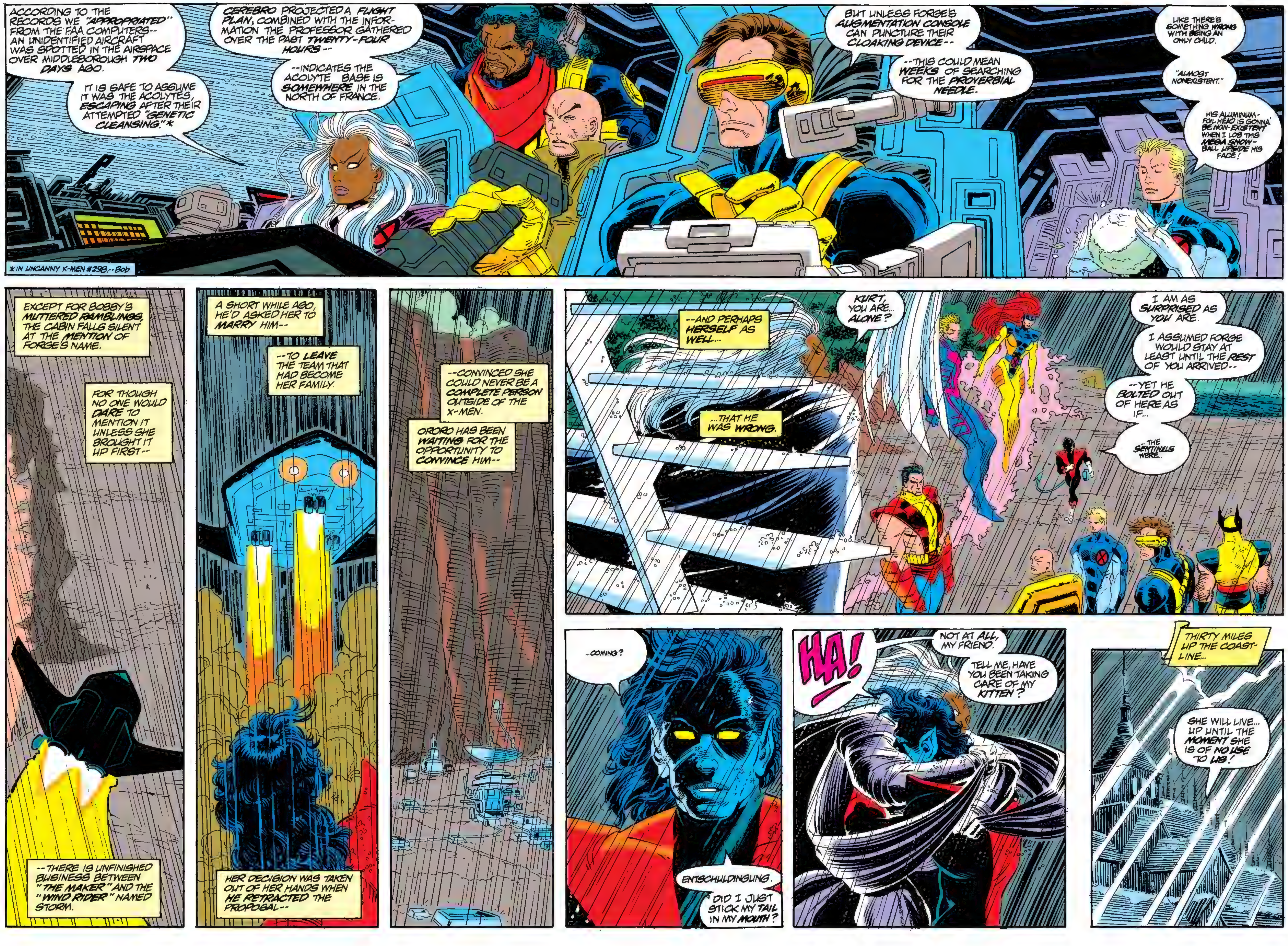
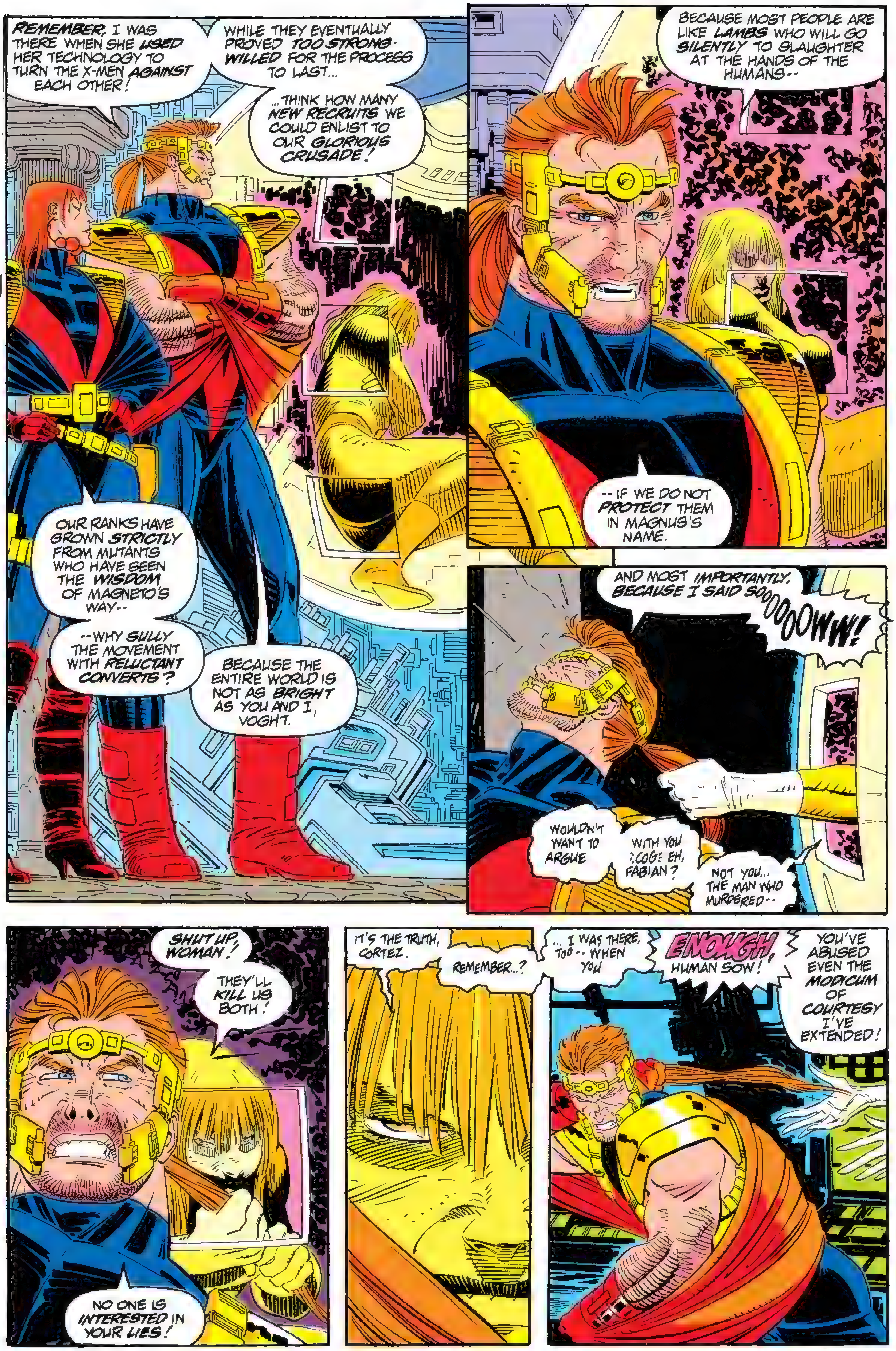
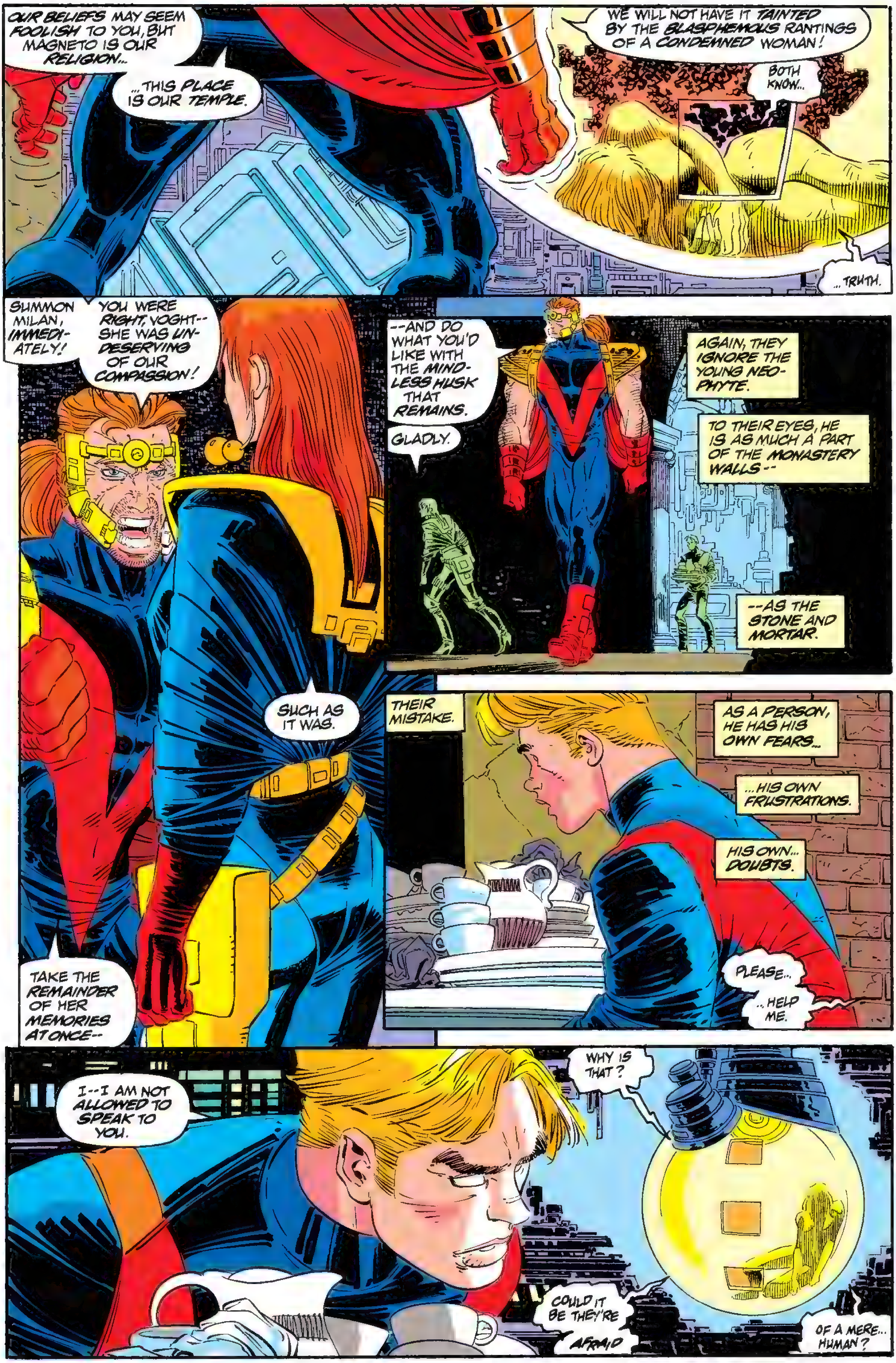
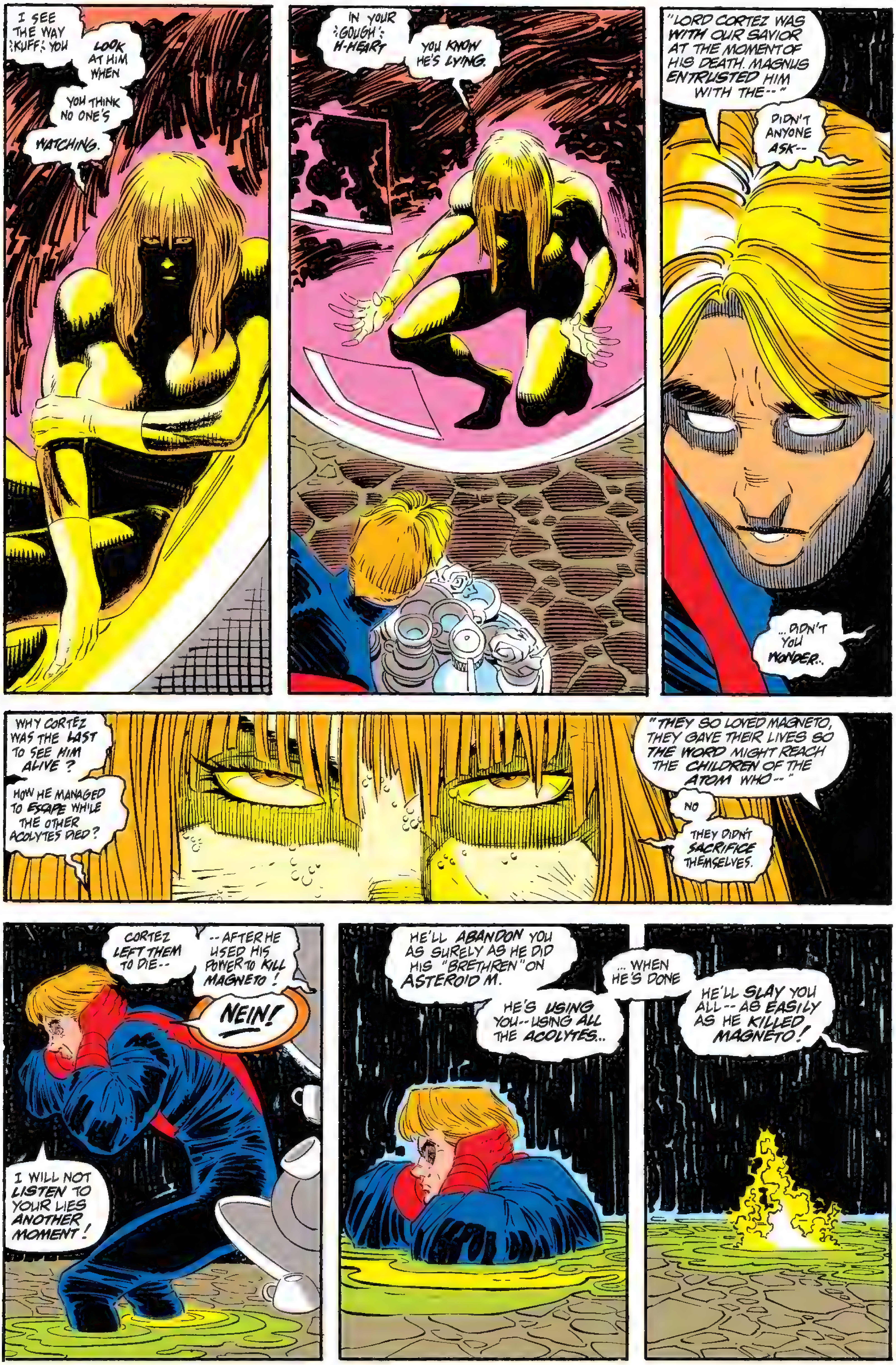

DO NOT MAKE THE MISTAKE OF DISMISSING THIS WOMAN, SIMPLY BECAUSE SHE IS GENETICALLY INFERIOR.
SHE IS NOT SOMEONE TO UNDERESTIMATE.
THIS SAME GENE-TRASH WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR REARRANGING MAGNETO'S DNA STRUCTURE!
YES, SIR... I'LL START FRESH IN THE MORNING.
MAKING US ALL BEHOLDEN TO A HUMAN, CORTEZ? IF MAGNETO HADN'T ALREADY DIED, THIS WOULD CERTAINLY HAVE KILLED HIM!
AS THEIR ARGUMENT RAGES--
--THE YOUNG MAN IS IGNORED BY THE HIGHER MEMBERS OF HIS ORDER.
WERE HE ALLOWED TO SPEAK-- THE YOUNG NEOPHYTE MIGHT QUESTION THEIR ACTIONS.
THE MAN HE HAS CHOSEN TO FOLLOW, OF HIS OWN FREE WILL, HAD NO GREAT LOVE OF HUMANS... TRUE.
BUT MAGNUS UNDERSTOOD WHAT IT MEANT TO EXTEND KINDNESS --NOT EXCLUDING ONE'S ENEMIES.
HE ONCE WROTE--
"EVEN THE FLY SHOULD FEEL AT HOME IN THE WEB."
EVEN IF THAT HOME--

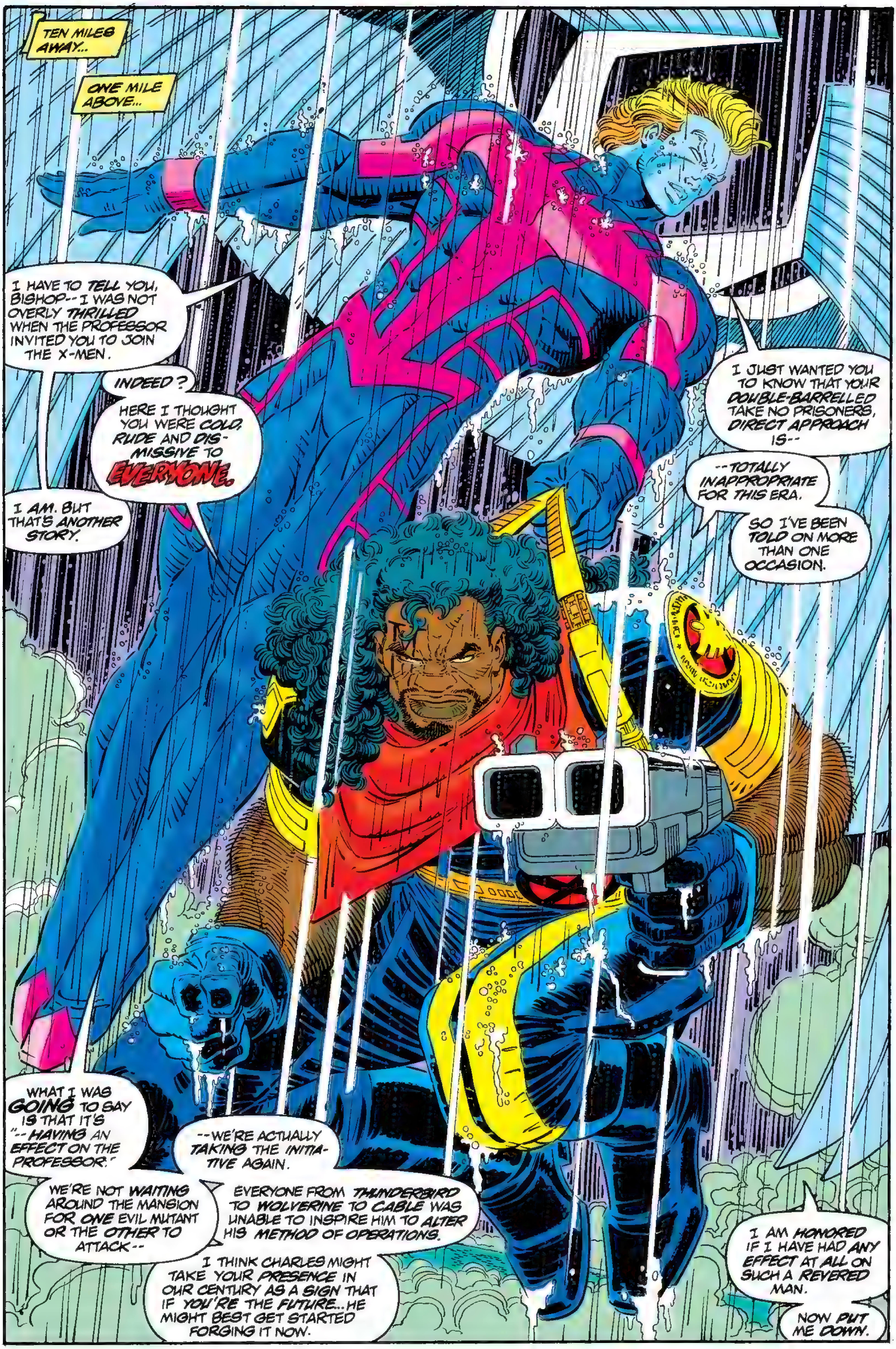

--IS A CASTLE.
OR IN THIS CASE, THE ABANDONED MONASTERY THAT IS THE MONT SAINT FRANCIS.
CURRENTLY? WE'RE THIRTY MILES AWAY FROM OUR RENDEZVOUS WITH NIGHT-CRAWLER.
BUT I DIDN'T CALL TO GIVE YOU A PROGRESS REPORT--
--RATHER, TO RECEIVE ONE.
HOW IS MY SISTER FEELING?
ILLYANA IS RESTING AS COMFORTABLY AS POSSIBLE, PETER... HER COUGH SEEMS TO BE BREAKING UP.
AND THE FEVER, STEVIE?
CLIMBING, I'M AFRAID.
I'LL KEEP YOU POSTED.
SEE THAT YOU DO, MS. HUNTER.
RELAX, COLOSSUS, I KNOW JUST HOW IT FEELS WHEN YOU'RE WAIT--
I DOUBT THAT YOU DO, ROBERT.
PARDON?
I CAME FROM A CLOSE, LOVING HOUSEHOLD--ONLY TO HAVE LOST EACH MEMBER OF MY FAMILY TO ONE TRAGEDY AFTER ANOTHER.
ILLYANA IS THE MOST IMPORTANT PERSON IN MY LIFE.
WITHOUT HER, I HAVE NOTHING.
DON'T DEMEAN MY FEELINGS BY CLAIMING YOU "UNDERSTAND."
FOR YOU MOST CERTAINLY DO NOT.
EXCUSE ME FOR CARING!
TIN HEAD!

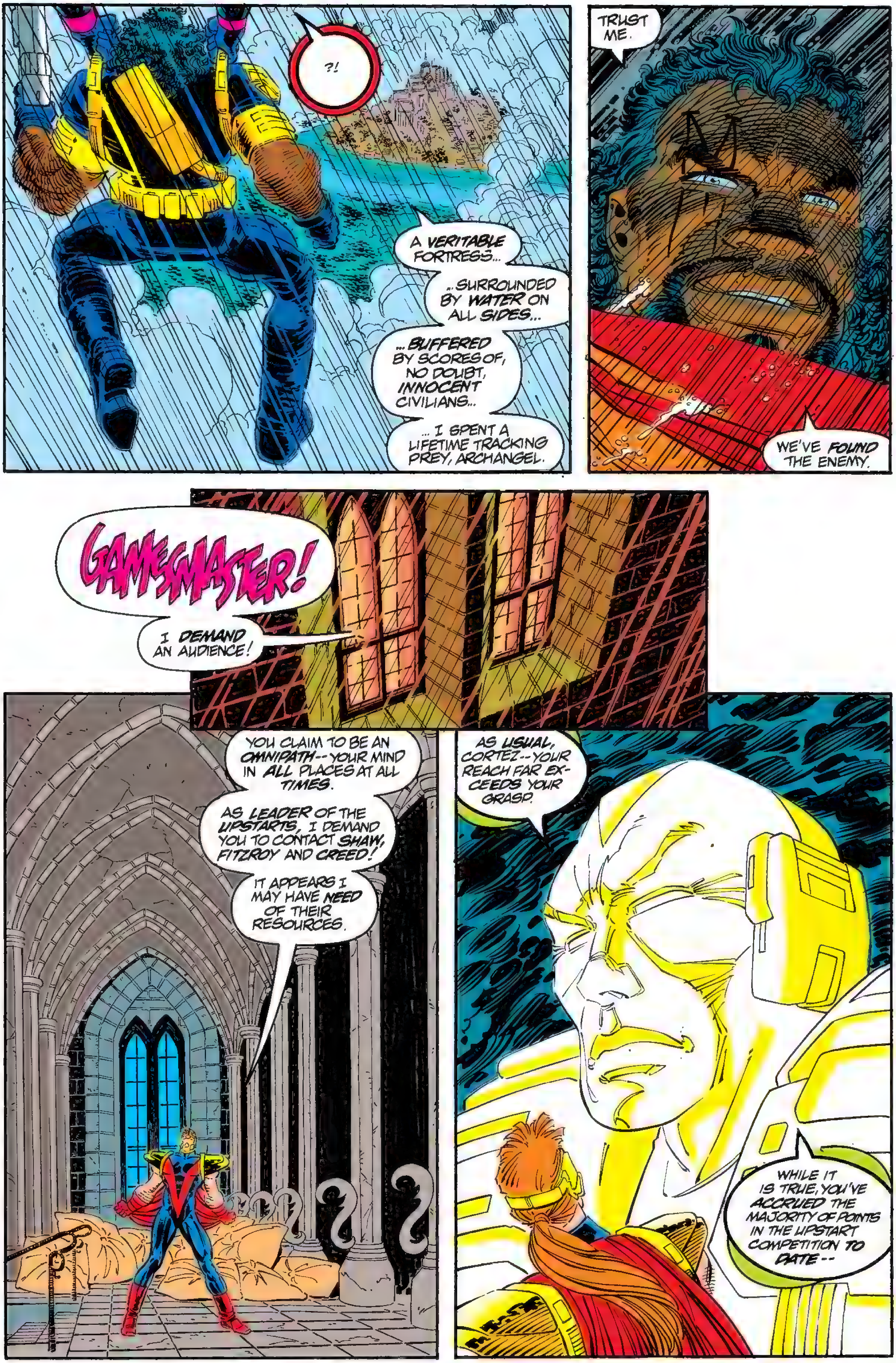

ACCORDING TO THE RECORDS WE "APPROPRIATED" FROM THE FAA COMPUTERS-- AN UNIDENTIFIED AIRCRAFT WAS SPOTTED IN THE AIRSPACE OVER MIDDLEBOROUGH TWO DAYS AGO.
IT IS SAFE TO ASSUME IT WAS THE ACOLYTES, ESCAPING AFTER THEIR ATTEMPTED "GENETIC CLEANSING."*
CEREBRO PROJECTED A FLIGHT PLAN, COMBINED WITH THE INFORMATION THE PROFESSOR GATHERED OVER THE PAST TWENTY-FOUR HOURS--
--INDICATES THE ACOLYTE BASE IS SOMEWHERE IN THE NORTH OF FRANCE.
BUT UNLESS FORGE'S AUGMENTATION CONSOLE CAN PUNCTURE THEIR CLOAKING DEVICE--
--THIS COULD MEAN WEEKS OF SEARCHING FOR THE PROVERBIAL NEEDLE.
LIKE THERE'S SOMETHING WRONG WITH BEING AN ONLY CHILD.
"ALMOST NONEXISTENT."
HIS ALUMINUM-FOIL HEAD IS GONNA' BE NON-EXISTENT WHEN I LOB THIS MEGA SNOW-BALL UPSIDE HIS FACE!
* IN UNCANNY X-MEN #298.--Bob
EXCEPT FOR BOBBY'S MUTTERED RAMBLINGS, THE CABIN FALLS SILENT AT THE MENTION OF FORGE'S NAME.
FOR THOUGH NO ONE WOULD DARE TO MENTION IT UNLESS SHE BROUGHT IT UP FIRST--
--THERE IS UNFINISHED BUSINESS BETWEEN "THE MAKER" AND THE "WIND RIDER" NAMED STORM.
A SHORT WHILE AGO, HE'D ASKED HER TO MARRY HIM--
--TO LEAVE THE TEAM THAT HAD BECOME HER FAMILY.
HER DECISION WAS TAKEN OUT OF HER HANDS WHEN HE RETRACTED THE PROPOSAL--
--CONVINCED SHE COULD NEVER BE A COMPLETE PERSON OUTSIDE OF THE X-MEN.
ORORO HAS BEEN WAITING FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO CONVINCE HIM--
--AND PERHAPS HERSELF AS WELL...
...THAT HE WAS WRONG.
KURT, YOU ARE... ALONE?
I AM AS SURPRISED AS YOU ARE.
I ASSUMED FORGE WOULD STAY AT LEAST UNTIL THE REST OF YOU ARRIVED--
--YET HE BOLTED OUT OF HERE AS IF...
...THE SENTINELS WERE...
...COMING?
ENTSCHULDINGUNG.
DID I JUST STICK MY TAIL IN MY MOUTH?
HA!
NOT AT ALL, MY FRIEND.
TELL ME, HAVE YOU BEEN TAKING CARE OF MY KITTEN?
THIRTY MILES UP THE COAST-LINE...
SHE WILL LIVE... UP UNTIL THE MOMENT SHE IS OF NO USE TO US!

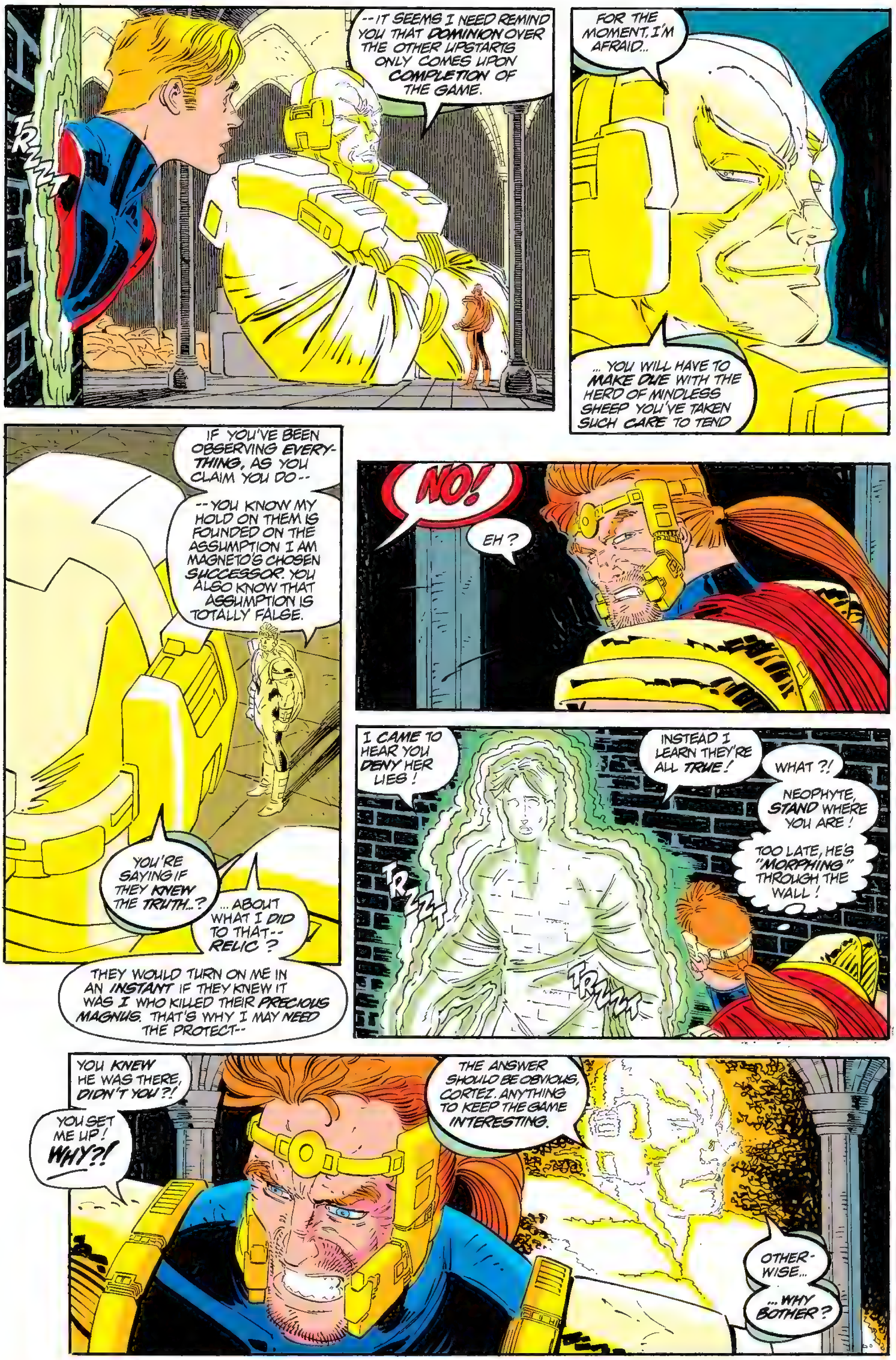

REMEMBER, I WAS THERE WHEN SHE USED HER TECHNOLOGY TO TURN THE X-MEN AGAINST EACH OTHER!
WHILE THEY EVENTUALLY PROVED TOO STRONG-WILLED FOR THE PROCESS TO LAST...
...THINK HOW MANY NEW RECRUITS WE COULD ENLIST TO OUR GLORIOUS CRUSADE!
OUR RANKS HAVE GROWN STRICTLY FROM MUTANTS WHO HAVE SEEN THE WISDOM OF MAGNETO'S WAY--
--WHY SULLY THE MOVEMENT WITH RELUCTANT CONVERTS?
BECAUSE THE ENTIRE WORLD IS NOT AS BRIGHT AS YOU AND I, VOGHT.
BECAUSE MOST PEOPLE ARE LIKE LAMBS WHO WILL GO SILENTLY TO SLAUGHTER AT THE HANDS OF THE HUMANS--
--IF WE DO NOT PROTECT THEM IN MAGNUS'S NAME.
AND MOST IMPORTANTLY, BECAUSE I SAID SOOOOOOWW!
WOULDN'T WANT TO ARGUE
WITH YOU :COG: EH, FABIAN?
NOT YOU... THE MAN WHO MURDERED--
SHUT UP, WOMAN!
THEY'LL KILL US BOTH!
NO ONE IS INTERESTED IN YOUR LIES!
IT'S THE TRUTH, CORTEZ.
REMEMBER...?
... I WAS THERE, TOO -- WHEN YOU
ENOUGH, HUMAN SOW!
YOU'VE ABUSED EVEN THE MODICUM OF COURTESY I'VE EXTENDED!

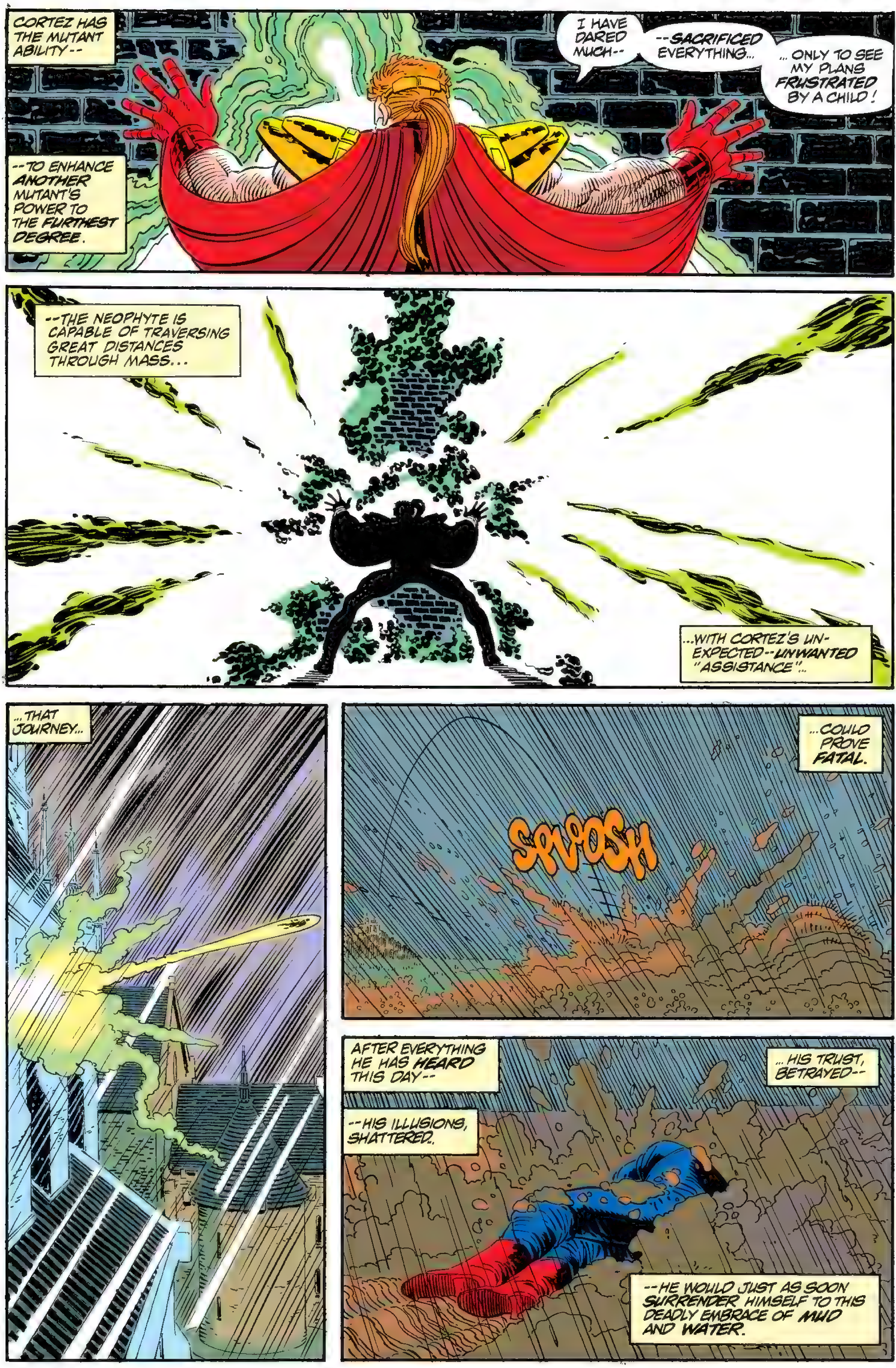

OUR BELIEFS MAY SEEM FOOLISH TO YOU, BUT MAGNETO IS OUR RELIGION...
...THIS PLACE IS OUR TEMPLE.
WE WILL NOT HAVE IT TAINTED BY THE BLASPHEMOUS RANTINGS OF A CONDEMNED WOMAN!
BOTH KNOW...
...TRUTH.
SUMMON MILAN, IMMEDIATELY!
YOU WERE RIGHT, VOGHT-- SHE WAS UNDESERVING OF OUR COMPASSION!
SUCH AS IT WAS.
TAKE THE REMAINDER OF HER MEMORIES AT ONCE--
--AND DO WHAT YOU'D LIKE WITH THE MINDLESS HUSK THAT REMAINS.
GLADLY.
AGAIN, THEY IGNORE THE YOUNG NEOPHYTE.
TO THEIR EYES, HE IS AS MUCH A PART OF THE MONASTERY WALLS--
--AS THE STONE AND MORTAR.
THEIR MISTAKE.
AS A PERSON, HE HAS HIS OWN FEARS...
...HIS OWN FRUSTRATIONS.
HIS OWN... DOUBTS.
PLEASE...
...HELP ME.
I--I AM NOT ALLOWED TO SPEAK TO YOU.
WHY IS THAT?
COULD IT BE THEY'RE AFRAID
OF A MERE... HUMAN?

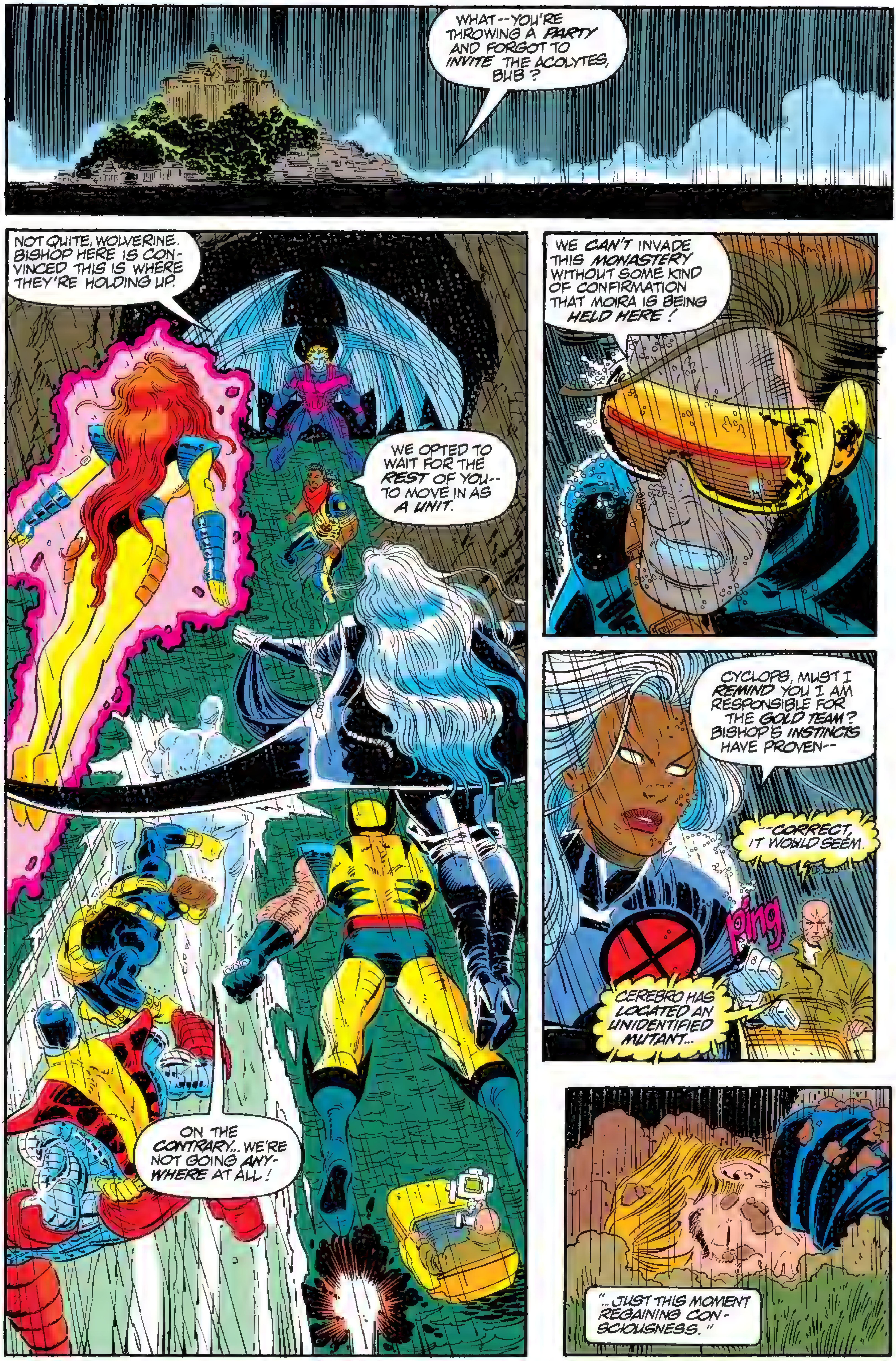

I SEE THE WAY :KUFF: YOU
LOOK AT HIM WHEN
YOU THINK NO ONE'S
WATCHING.
IN YOUR :GOUGH: H-HEART
YOU KNOW HE'S LYING.
"LORD CORTEZ WAS WITH OUR SAVIOR AT THE MOMENT OF HIS DEATH. MAGNUS ENTRUSTED HIM WITH THE--"
DIDN'T ANYONE ASK--
...DIDN'T YOU WONDER..
WHY CORTEZ WAS THE LAST TO SEE HIM ALIVE?
HOW HE MANAGED TO ESCAPE WHILE THE OTHER ACOLYTES DIED?
"THEY SO LOVED MAGNETO, THEY GAVE THEIR LIVES SO THE WORD MIGHT REACH THE CHILDREN OF THE ATOM WHO--"
NO
THEY DIDN'T SACRIFICE THEMSELVES.
CORTEZ LEFT THEM TO DIE--
--AFTER HE USED HIS POWER TO KILL MAGNETO!
NEIN!
I WILL NOT LISTEN TO YOUR LIES ANOTHER MOMENT!
HE'LL ABANDON YOU AS SURELY AS HE DID HIS "BRETHREN" ON ASTEROID M.
HE'S USING YOU--USING ALL THE ACOLYTES...
...WHEN HE'S DONE
HE'LL SLAY YOU ALL--AS EASILY AS HE KILLED MAGNETO!

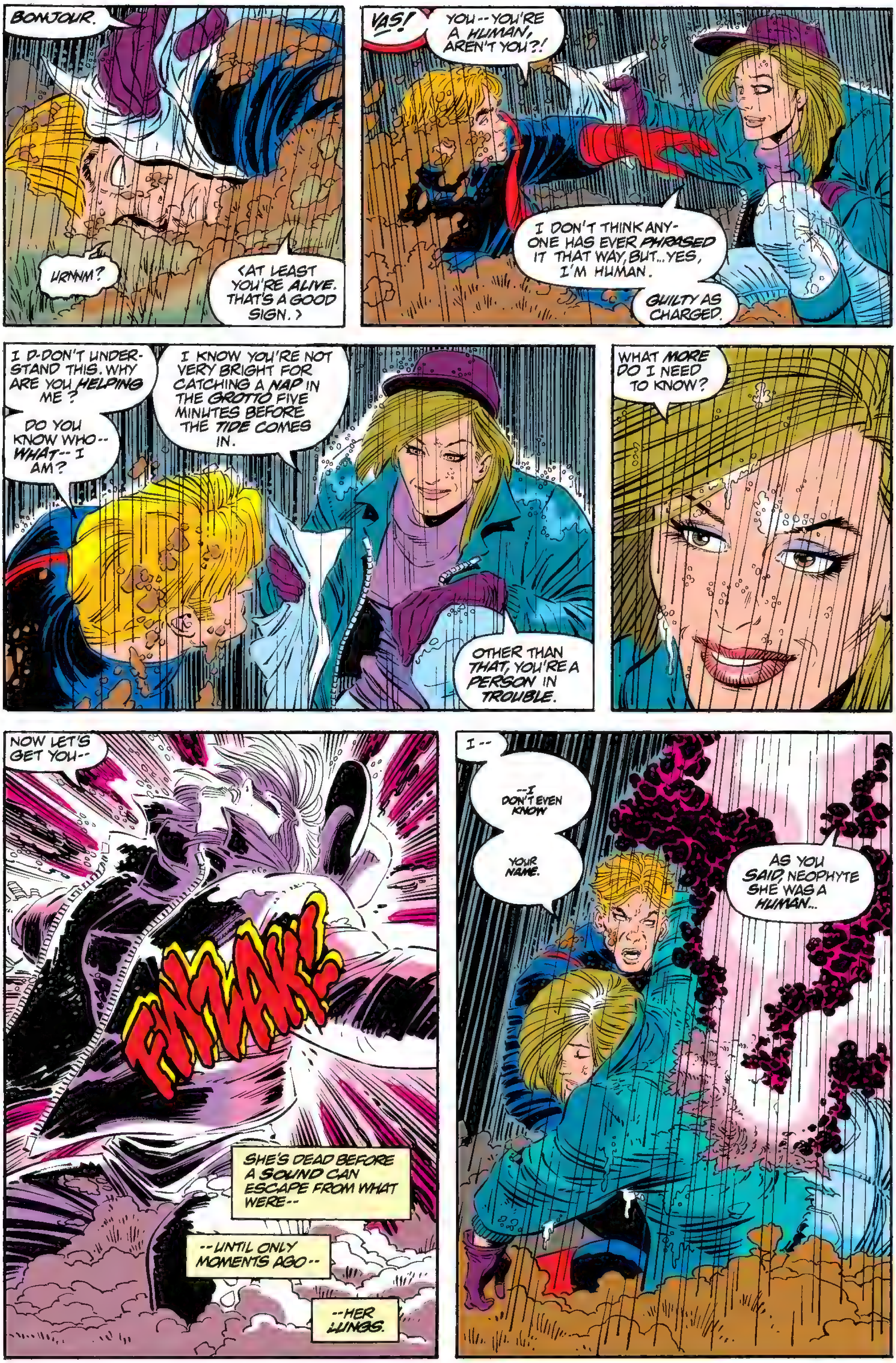

TEN MILES AWAY...
ONE MILE ABOVE...
I HAVE TO TELL YOU, BISHOP-- I WAS NOT OVERLY THRILLED WHEN THE PROFESSOR INVITED YOU TO JOIN THE X-MEN.
INDEED? HERE I THOUGHT YOU WERE COLD, RUDE AND DISMISSIVE TO EVERYONE.
I AM. BUT THAT'S ANOTHER STORY.
I JUST WANTED YOU TO KNOW THAT YOUR DOUBLE-BARRELLED TAKE NO PRISONERS, DIRECT APPROACH IS--
--TOTALLY INAPPROPRIATE FOR THIS ERA. SO I'VE BEEN TOLD ON MORE THAN ONE OCCASION.
WHAT I WAS GOING TO SAY IS THAT IT'S "--HAVING AN EFFECT ON THE PROFESSOR."
WE'RE NOT WAITING AROUND THE MANSION FOR ONE EVIL MUTANT OR THE OTHER TO ATTACK--
--WE'RE ACTUALLY TAKING THE INITIATIVE AGAIN.
EVERYONE FROM THUNDERBIRD TO WOLVERINE TO CABLE WAS UNABLE TO INSPIRE HIM TO ALTER HIS METHOD OF OPERATIONS.
I THINK CHARLES MIGHT TAKE YOUR PRESENCE IN OUR CENTURY AS A SIGN THAT IF YOU'RE THE FUTURE... HE MIGHT BEST GET STARTED FORGING IT NOW.
I AM HONORED IF I HAVE HAD ANY EFFECT AT ALL ON SUCH A REVERED MAN.
NOW PUT ME DOWN.

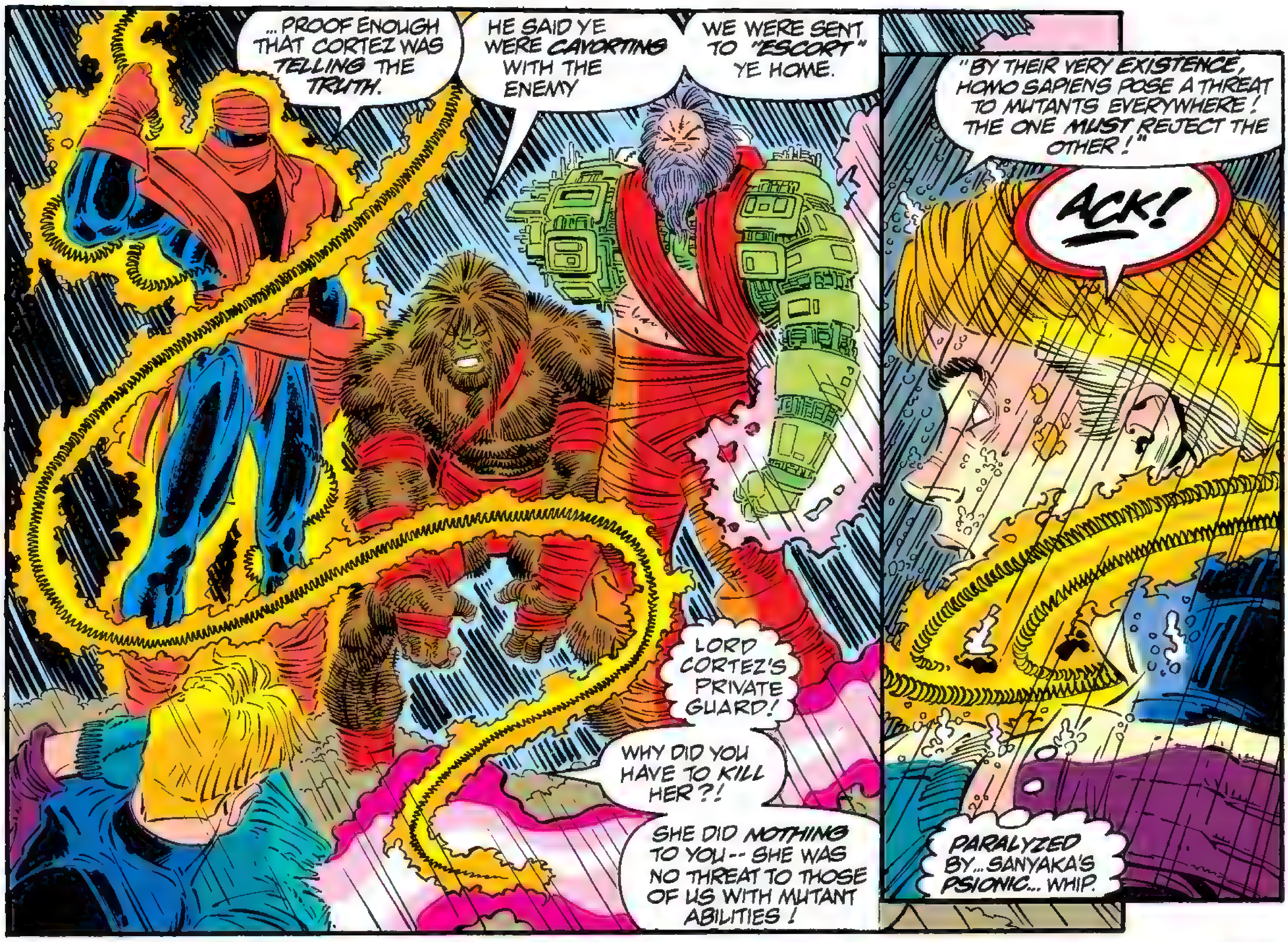

?!
A VERITABLE FORTRESS...
...SURROUNDED BY WATER ON ALL SIDES...
...BUFFERED BY SCORES OF, NO DOUBT, INNOCENT CIVILIANS...
...I SPENT A LIFETIME TRACKING PREY, ARCHANGEL.
TRUST ME.
WE'VE FOUND THE ENEMY.
GAMESMASTER!
I DEMAND AN AUDIENCE!
YOU CLAIM TO BE AN OMNIPATH--YOUR MIND IN ALL PLACES AT ALL TIMES.
AS LEADER OF THE UPSTARTS, I DEMAND YOU TO CONTACT SHAW, FITZROY AND CREED!
IT APPEARS I MAY HAVE NEED OF THEIR RESOURCES.
AS USUAL, CORTEZ--YOUR REACH FAR EXCEEDS YOUR GRASP.
WHILE IT IS TRUE, YOU'VE ACCRUED THE MAJORITY OF POINTS IN THE UPSTART COMPETITION TO DATE--

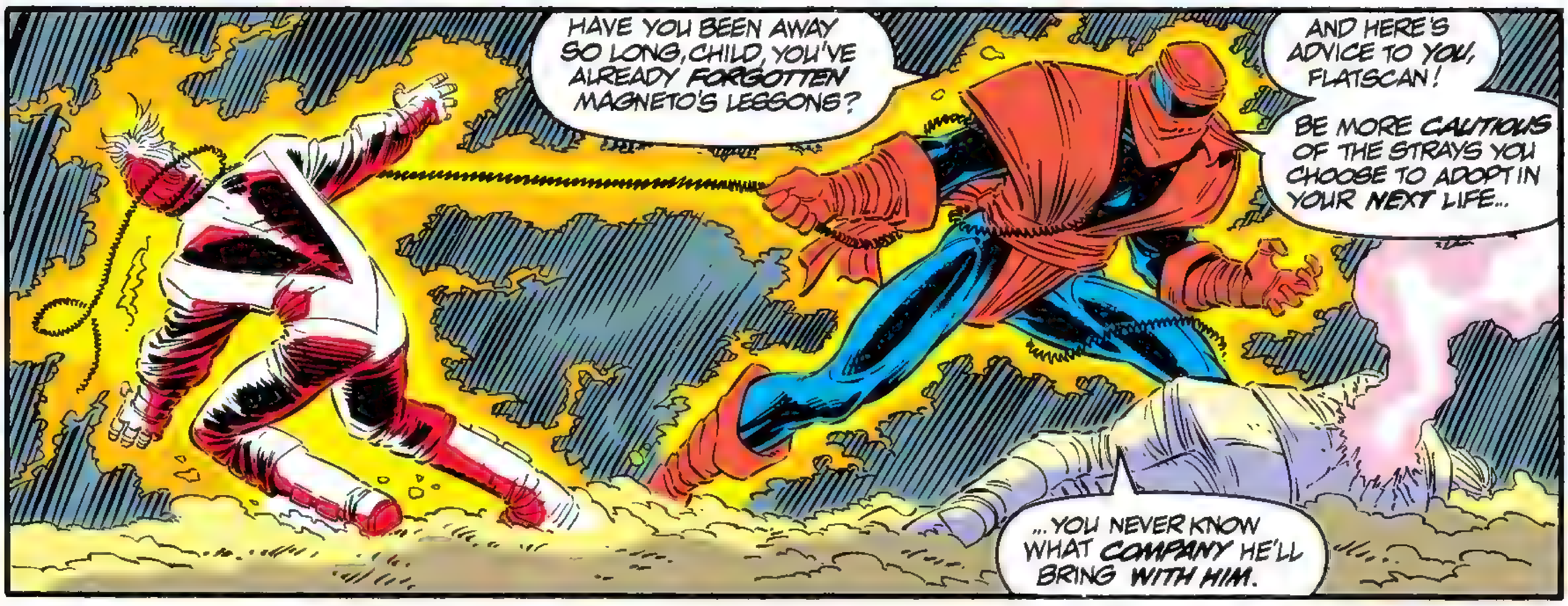

--IT SEEMS I NEED REMIND YOU THAT DOMINION OVER THE OTHER UPSTARTS ONLY COMES UPON COMPLETION OF THE GAME.
TRZZT
FOR THE MOMENT, I'M AFRAID...
...YOU WILL HAVE TO MAKE DUE WITH THE HERD OF MINDLESS SHEEP YOU'VE TAKEN SUCH CARE TO TEND
IF YOU'VE BEEN OBSERVING EVERYTHING, AS YOU CLAIM YOU DO--
--YOU KNOW MY HOLD ON THEM IS FOUNDED ON THE ASSUMPTION I AM MAGNETO'S CHOSEN SUCCESSOR. YOU ALSO KNOW THAT ASSUMPTION IS TOTALLY FALSE.
YOU'RE SAYING IF THEY KNEW THE TRUTH..?
...ABOUT WHAT I DID TO THAT--RELIC?
THEY WOULD TURN ON ME IN AN INSTANT IF THEY KNEW IT WAS I WHO KILLED THEIR PRECIOUS MAGNUS. THAT'S WHY I MAY NEED THE PROTECT--
NO!
EH?
I CAME TO HEAR YOU DENY HER LIES!
INSTEAD I LEARN THEY'RE ALL TRUE!
WHAT?!
NEOPHYTE, STAND WHERE YOU ARE!
TOO LATE, HE'S "MORPHING" THROUGH THE WALL!
TRZZT
TRZZT
YOU KNEW HE WAS THERE, DIDN'T YOU?!
YOU SET ME UP! WHY?!
THE ANSWER SHOULD BE OBVIOUS, CORTEZ. ANYTHING TO KEEP THE GAME INTERESTING.
OTHER-WISE...
...WHY BOTHER?

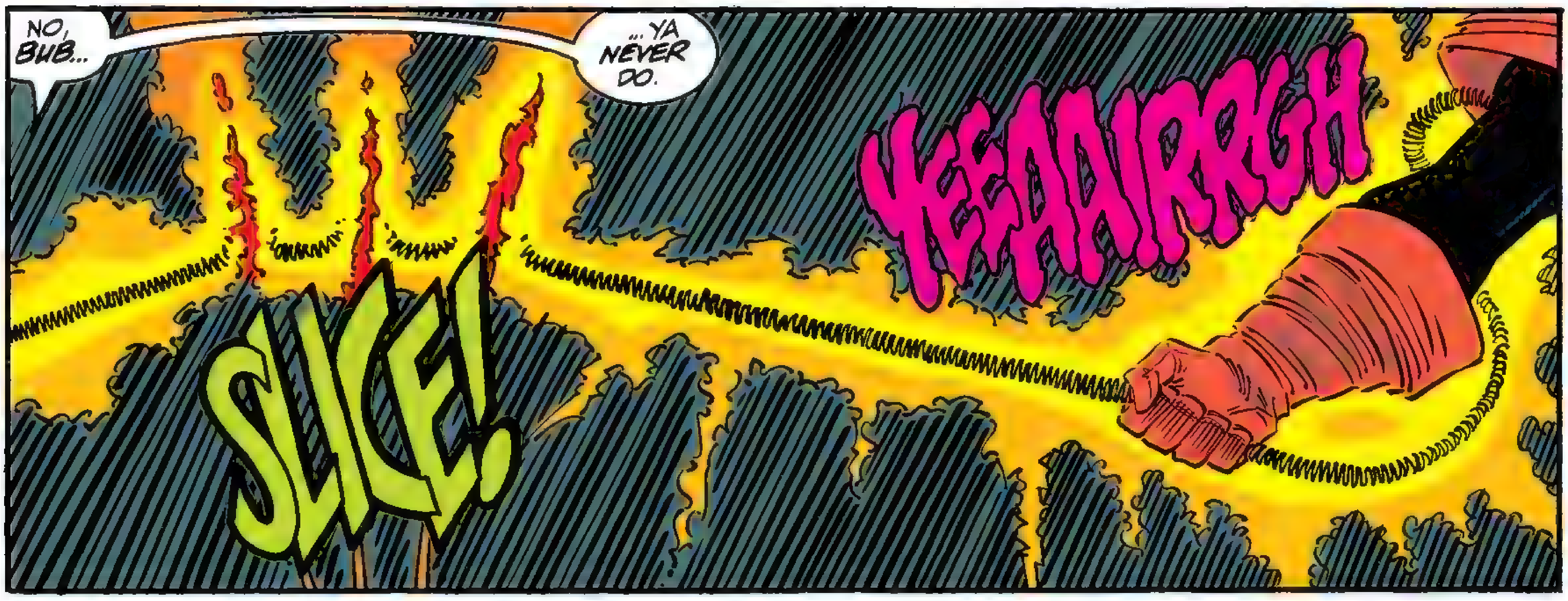

CORTEZ HAS THE MUTANT ABILITY--
--TO ENHANCE ANOTHER MUTANT'S POWER TO THE FURTHEST DEGREE.
I HAVE DARED MUCH--
--SACRIFICED EVERYTHING...
...ONLY TO SEE MY PLANS FRUSTRATED BY A CHILD!
--THE NEOPHYTE IS CAPABLE OF TRAVERSING GREAT DISTANCES THROUGH MASS...
...WITH CORTEZ'S UN-EXPECTED--UNWANTED "ASSISTANCE"...
...THAT JOURNEY...
...COULD PROVE FATAL.
SPLOOSH
AFTER EVERYTHING HE HAS HEARD THIS DAY--
...HIS TRUST, BETRAYED--
--HIS ILLUSIONS, SHATTERED.
--HE WOULD JUST AS SOON SURRENDER HIMSELF TO THIS DEADLY EMBRACE OF MUD AND WATER.

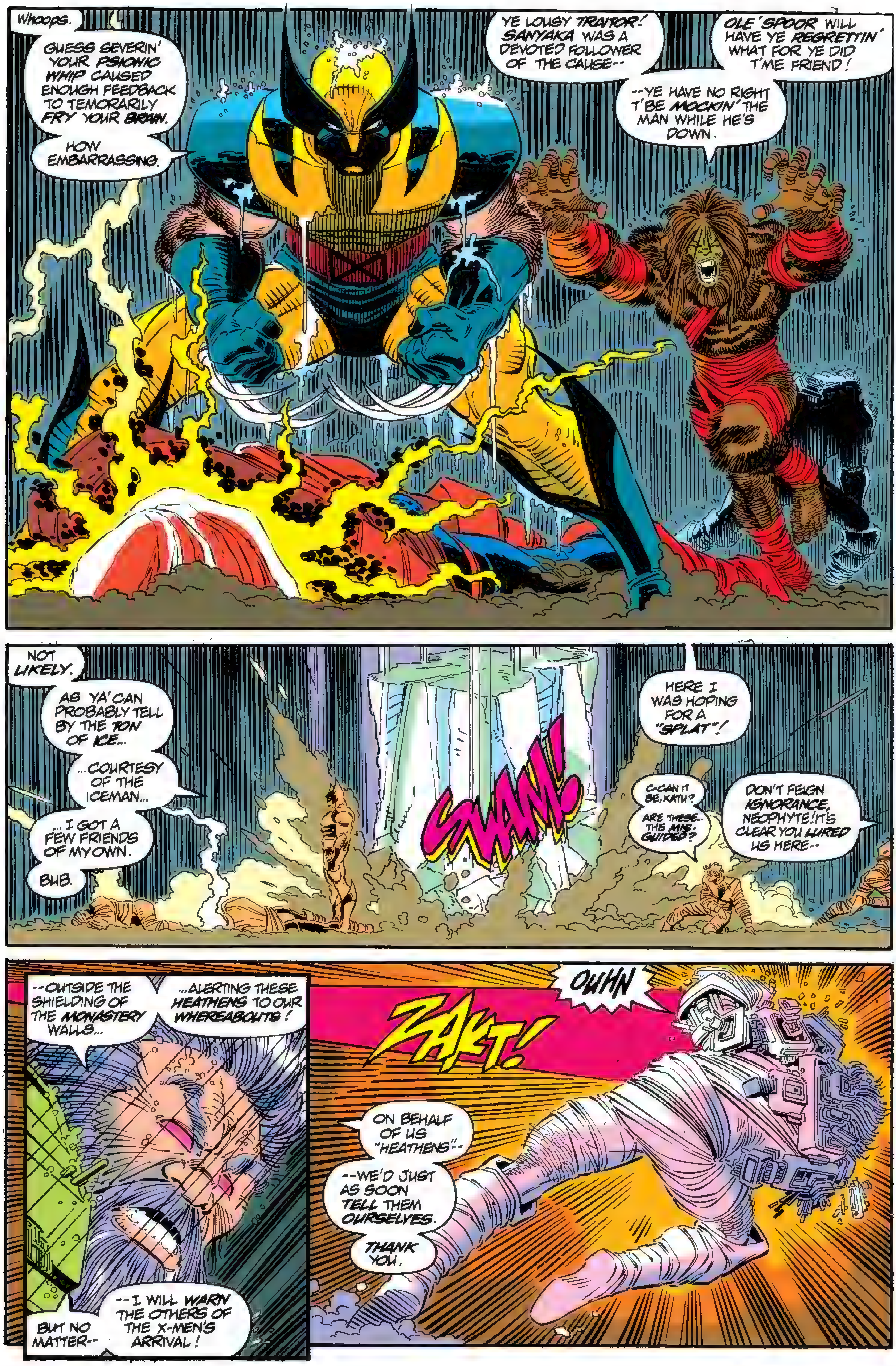

WHAT--YOU'RE THROWING A PARTY AND FORGOT TO INVITE THE ACOLYTES, BUB?
NOT QUITE, WOLVERINE. BISHOP HERE IS CONVINCED THIS IS WHERE THEY'RE HOLDING UP.
WE OPTED TO WAIT FOR THE REST OF YOU--TO MOVE IN AS A UNIT.
ON THE CONTRARY... WE'RE NOT GOING ANYWHERE AT ALL!
WE CAN'T INVADE THIS MONASTERY WITHOUT SOME KIND OF CONFIRMATION THAT MOIRA IS BEING HELD HERE!
CYCLOPS, MUST I REMIND YOU I AM RESPONSIBLE FOR THE GOLD TEAM? BISHOP'S INSTINCTS HAVE PROVEN--
--CORRECT, IT WOULD SEEM.
ping
CEREBRO HAS LOCATED AN UNIDENTIFIED MUTANT...
"...JUST THIS MOMENT REGAINING CONSCIOUSNESS."

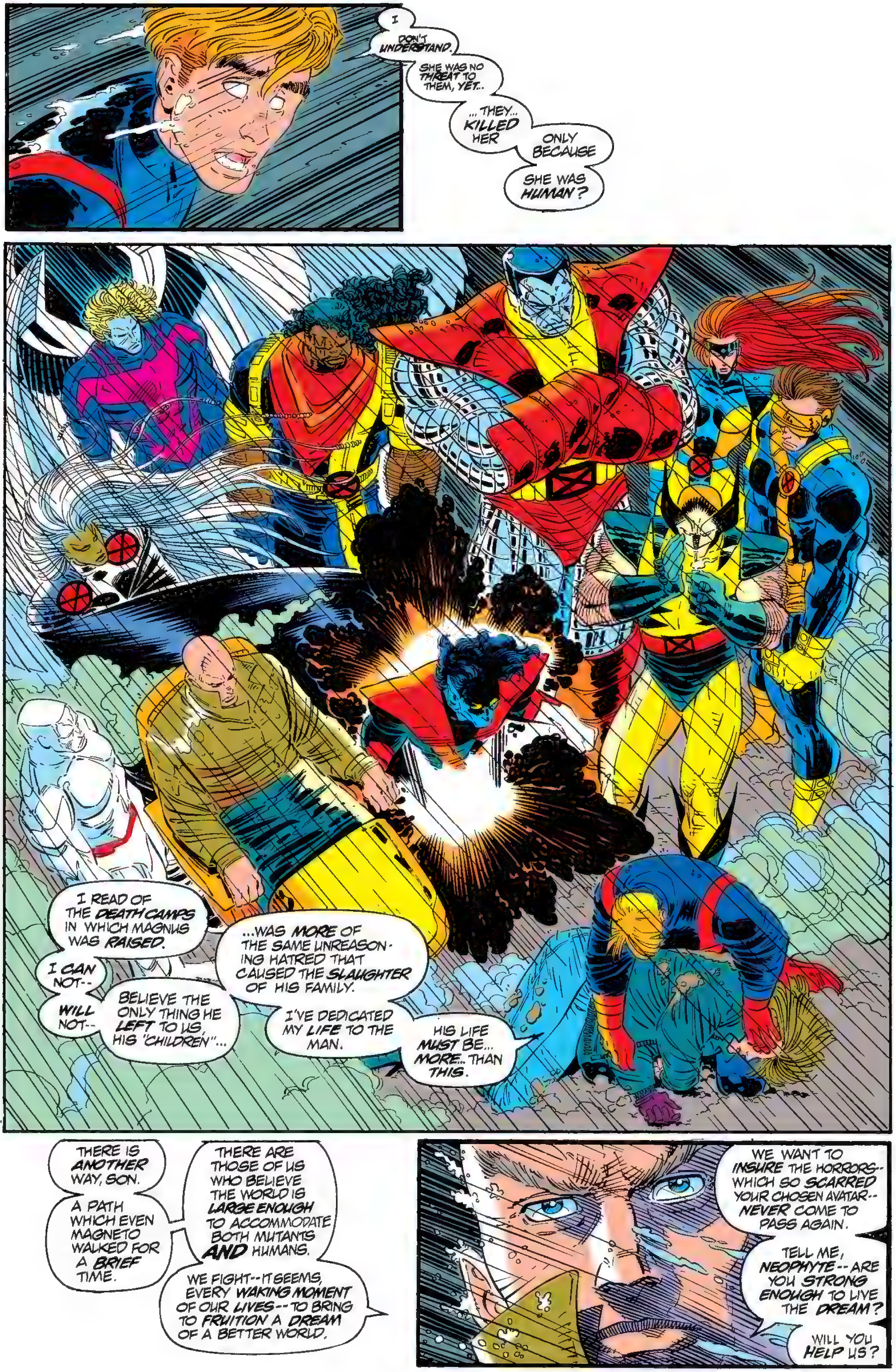

BONJOUR.
URNNM?
<AT LEAST YOU'RE ALIVE. THAT'S A GOOD SIGN.>
YAS!
YOU -- YOU'RE A HUMAN, AREN'T YOU?!
I DON'T THINK ANYONE HAS EVER PHRASED IT THAT WAY, BUT... YES, I'M HUMAN.
GUILTY AS CHARGED.
I D-DON'T UNDERSTAND THIS. WHY ARE YOU HELPING ME?
DO YOU KNOW WHO -- WHAT -- I AM?
I KNOW YOU'RE NOT VERY BRIGHT FOR CATCHING A NAP IN THE GROTTO FIVE MINUTES BEFORE THE TIDE COMES IN.
OTHER THAN THAT, YOU'RE A PERSON IN TROUBLE.
WHAT MORE DO I NEED TO KNOW?
NOW LET'S GET YOU--
FZZAK!
SHE'S DEAD BEFORE A SOUND CAN ESCAPE FROM WHAT WERE--
--UNTIL ONLY MOMENTS AGO--
--HER LUNGS.
I --
--I DON'T EVEN KNOW
YOUR NAME.
AS YOU SAID, NEOPHYTE SHE WAS A HUMAN...

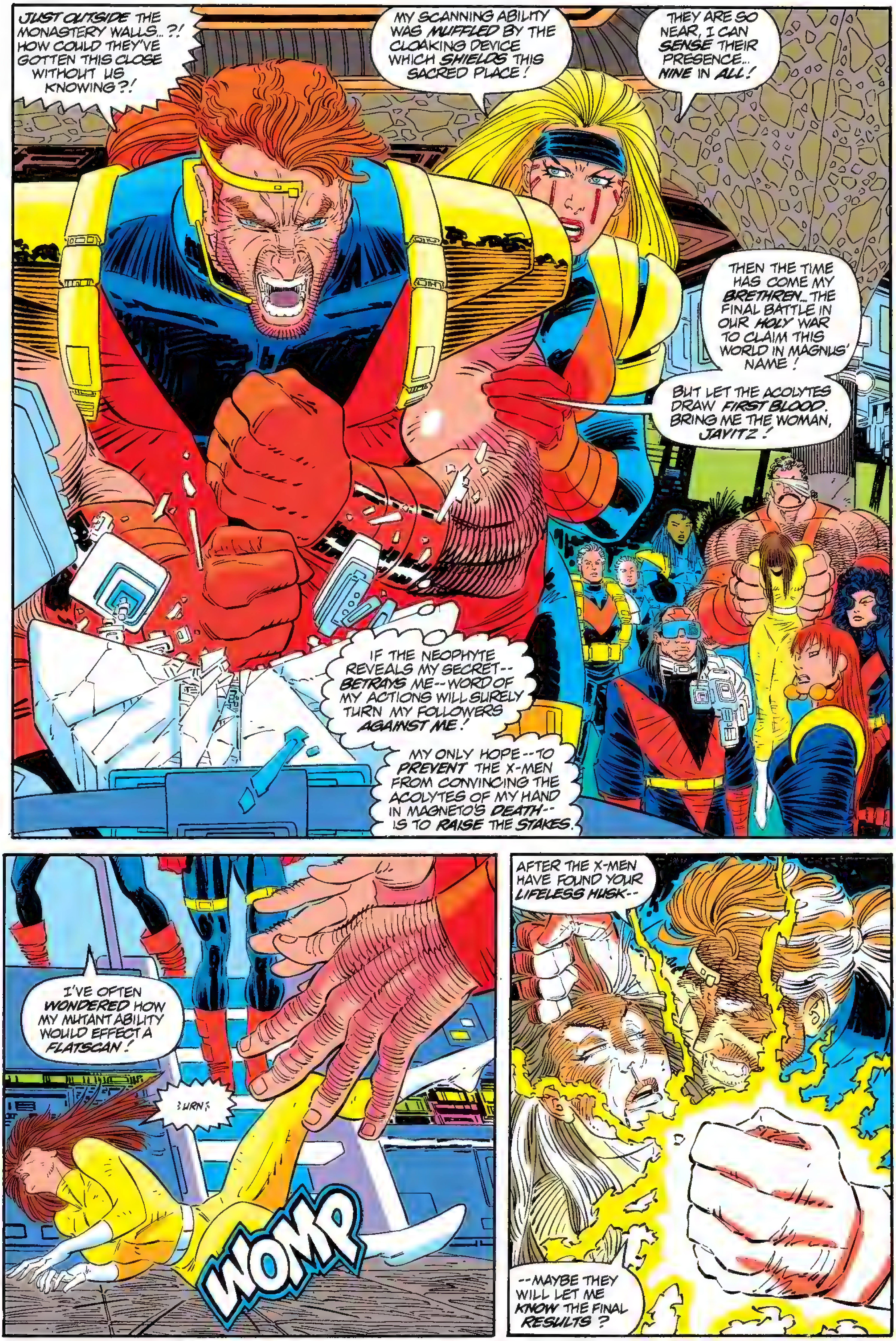

...PROOF ENOUGH THAT CORTEZ WAS *TELLING* THE *TRUTH*.
HE SAID YE WERE *CAVORTING* WITH THE ENEMY
WE WERE SENT TO *"ESCORT"* YE HOME.
LORD CORTEZ'S PRIVATE GUARD!
WHY DID YOU HAVE TO *KILL* HER?!
SHE DID *NOTHING* TO YOU-- SHE WAS NO THREAT TO THOSE OF US WITH MUTANT ABILITIES!
"BY THEIR VERY *EXISTENCE*, HOMO SAPIENS POSE A THREAT TO MUTANTS EVERYWHERE! THE ONE *MUST* REJECT THE OTHER!"
ACK!
PARALYZED BY... SANYAKA'S *PSIONIC*... WHIP.

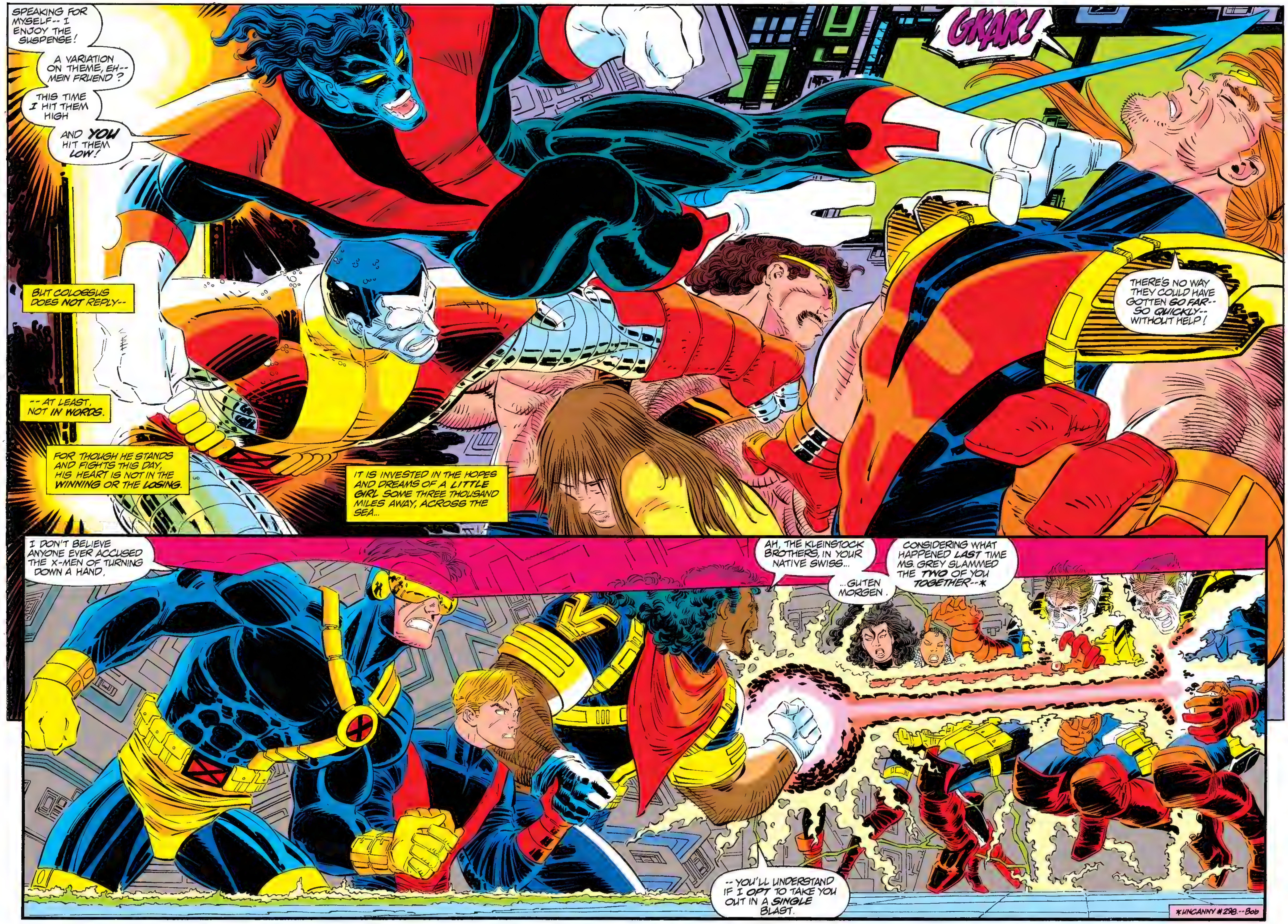

HAVE YOU BEEN AWAY SO LONG, CHILD, YOU'VE ALREADY *FORGOTTEN* MAGNETO'S LESSONS?
AND HERE'S ADVICE TO *YOU*, FLATSCAN!
BE MORE *CAUTIOUS* OF THE STRAYS YOU CHOOSE TO ADOPT IN YOUR *NEXT* LIFE...
...YOU NEVER KNOW WHAT *COMPANY* HE'LL BRING *WITH HIM*.

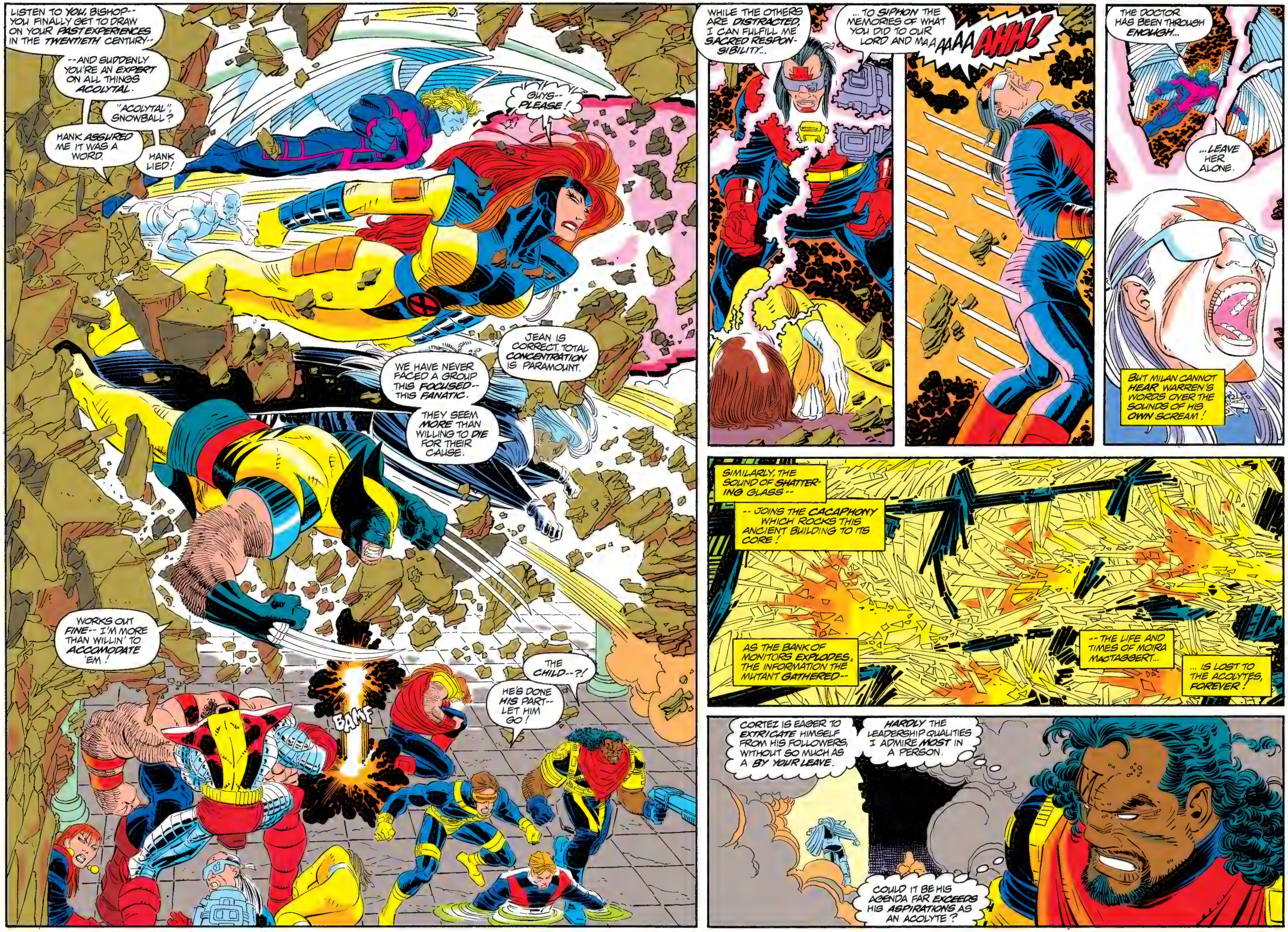

NO, BUB...
...YA *NEVER* DO.
YEEAAIRRGH
SLICE!

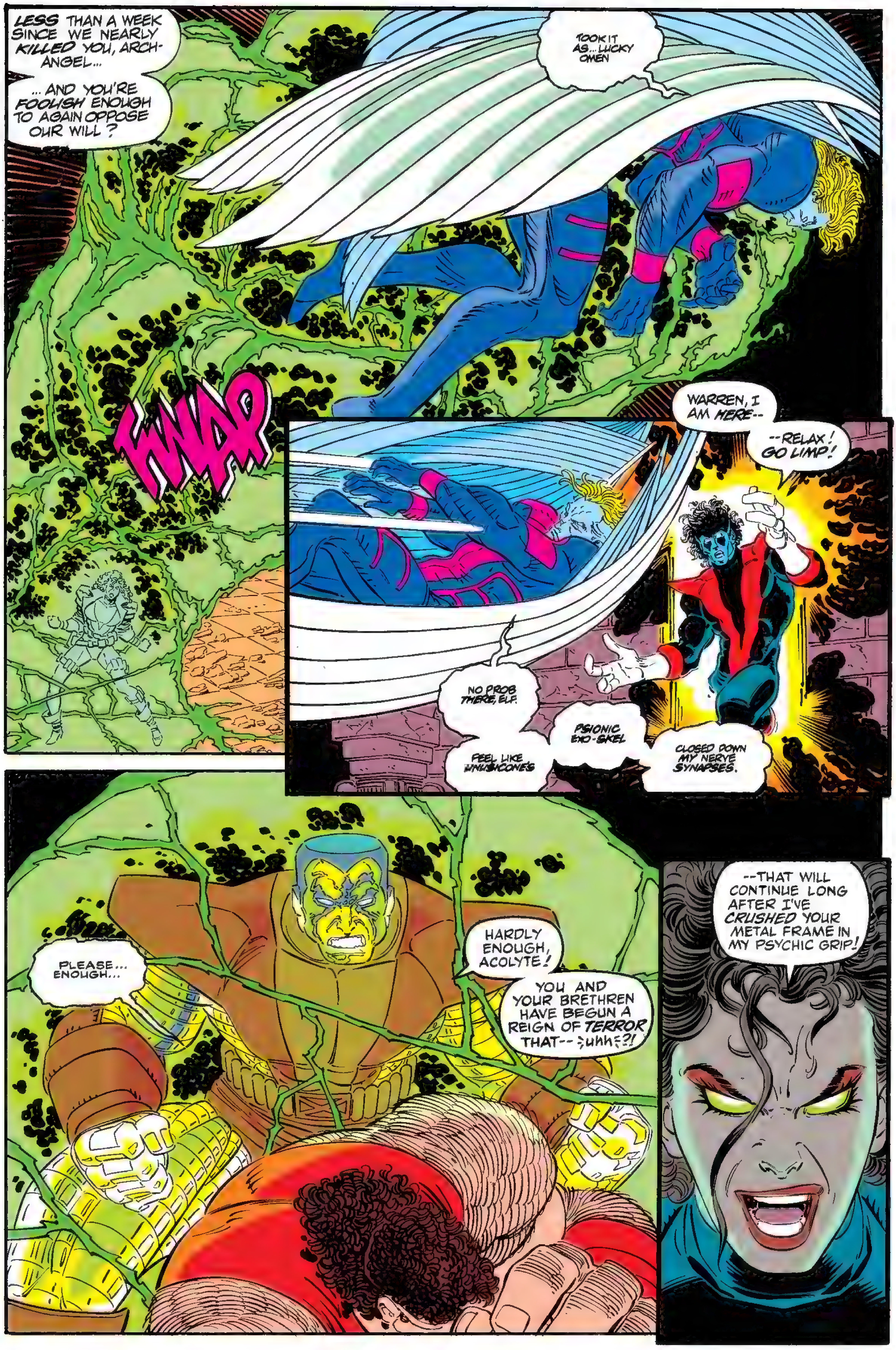

Whoops.
GUESS SEVERIN' YOUR PSIONIC WHIP CAUSED ENOUGH FEEDBACK TO TEMORARILY FRY YOUR BRAIN.
HOW EMBARRASSING.
YE LOUSY TRAITOR! SANYAKA WAS A DEVOTED FOLLOWER OF THE CAUSE--
--YE HAVE NO RIGHT T'BE MOCKIN' THE MAN WHILE HE'S DOWN.
OLE' SPOOR WILL HAVE YE REGRETTIN' WHAT FOR YE DID T'ME FRIEND!
NOT LIKELY.
AS YA' CAN PROBABLY TELL BY THE TON OF ICE...
...COURTESY OF THE ICEMAN...
...I GOT A FEW FRIENDS OF MY OWN.
BUB.
SWAM!
HERE I WAS HOPING FOR A "SPLAT"!
C-CAN IT BE, KATU?
ARE THESE... THE MIS-GUIDED?
DON'T FEIGN IGNORANCE, NEOPHYTE! IT'S CLEAR YOU LURED US HERE--
--OUTSIDE THE SHIELDING OF THE MONASTERY WALLS...
...ALERTING THESE HEATHENS TO OUR WHEREABOUTS!
BUT NO MATTER--
--I WILL WARN THE OTHERS OF THE X-MEN'S ARRIVAL!
ZAKT!
OUHN
ON BEHALF OF US "HEATHENS"--
--WE'D JUST AS SOON TELL THEM OURSELVES.
THANK YOU.

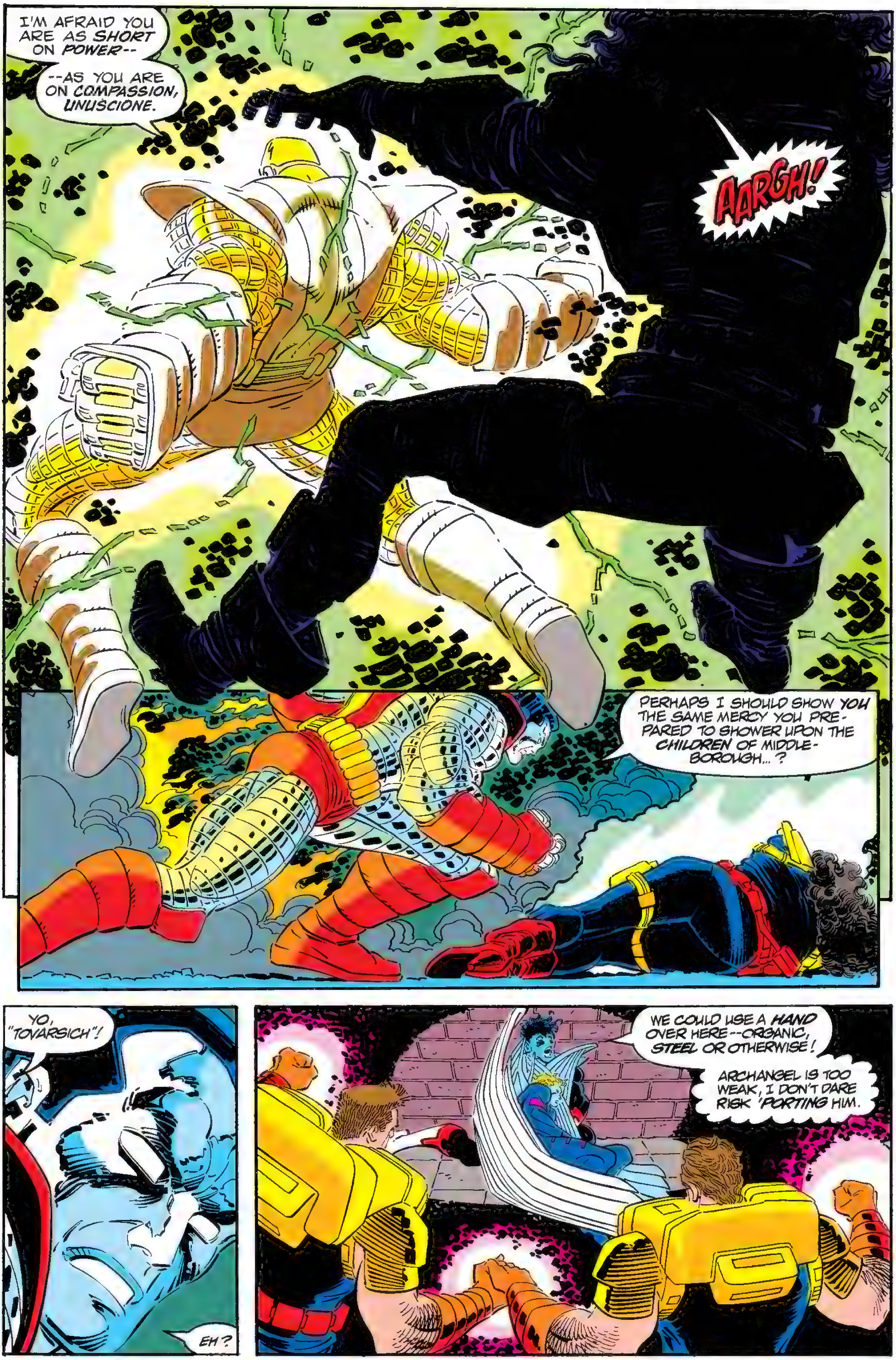

I DON'T UNDERSTAND.
SHE WAS NO THREAT TO THEM, YET...
...THEY... KILLED HER
ONLY BECAUSE
SHE WAS HUMAN?
I READ OF THE DEATH CAMPS IN WHICH MAGNUS WAS RAISED.
I CAN NOT--
WILL NOT--
BELIEVE THE ONLY THING HE LEFT TO US, HIS "CHILDREN"...
...WAS MORE OF THE SAME UNREASONING HATRED THAT CAUSED THE SLAUGHTER OF HIS FAMILY.
I'VE DEDICATED MY LIFE TO THE MAN.
HIS LIFE MUST BE... MORE... THAN THIS.
THERE IS ANOTHER WAY, SON.
A PATH WHICH EVEN MAGNETO WALKED FOR A BRIEF TIME.
THERE ARE THOSE OF US WHO BELIEVE THE WORLD IS LARGE ENOUGH TO ACCOMMODATE BOTH MUTANTS AND HUMANS.
WE FIGHT--IT SEEMS, EVERY WAKING MOMENT OF OUR LIVES--TO BRING TO FRUITION A DREAM OF A BETTER WORLD.
WE WANT TO INSURE THE HORRORS-- WHICH SO SCARRED YOUR CHOSEN AVATAR-- NEVER COME TO PASS AGAIN.
TELL ME, NEOPHYTE--ARE YOU STRONG ENOUGH TO LIVE THE DREAM?
WILL YOU HELP US?

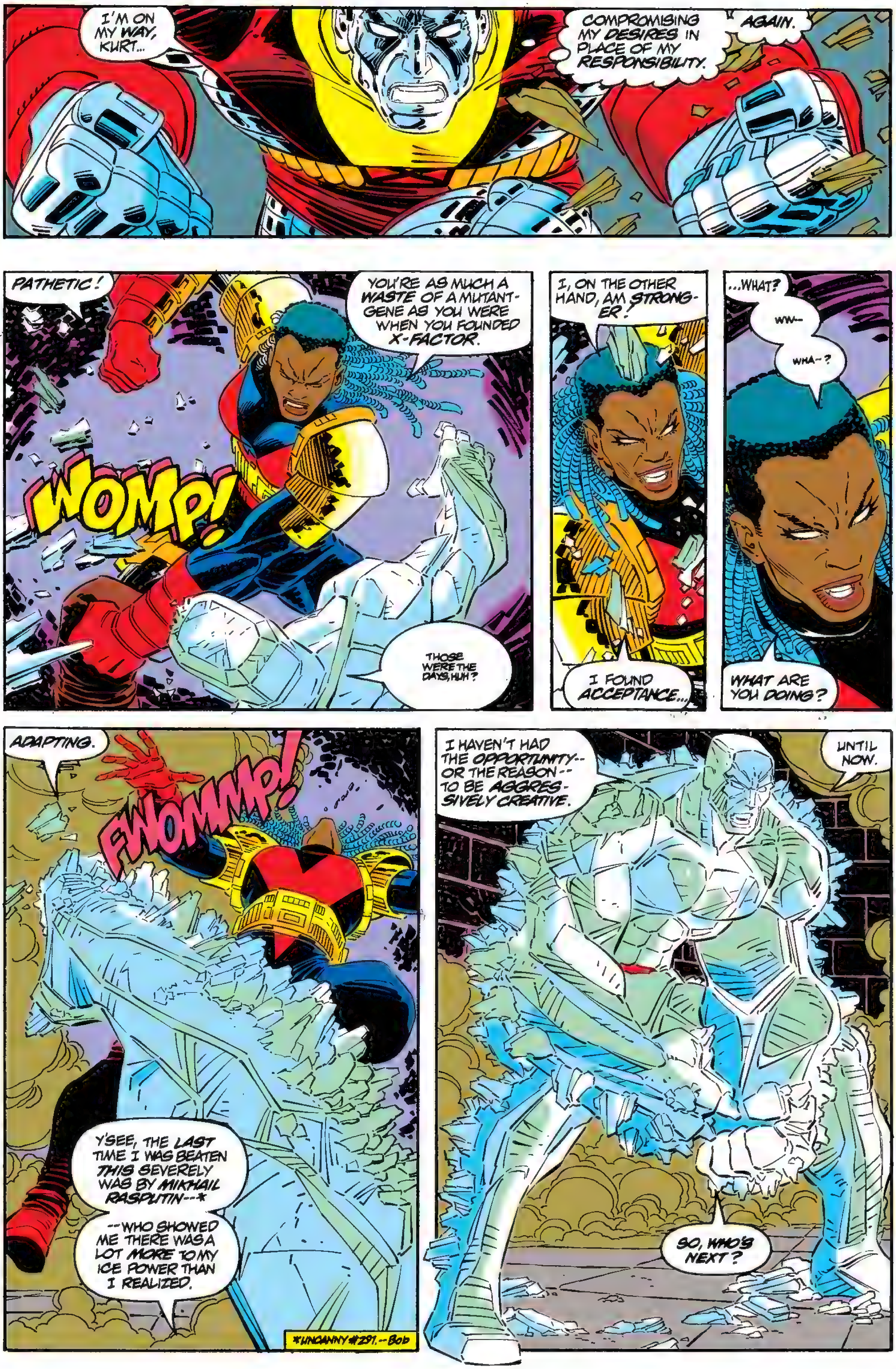

JUST OUTSIDE THE MONASTERY WALLS...?! HOW COULD THEY'VE GOTTEN THIS CLOSE WITHOUT US KNOWING?!
MY SCANNING ABILITY WAS MUFFLED BY THE CLOAKING DEVICE WHICH SHIELDS THIS SACRED PLACE!
THEY ARE SO NEAR, I CAN SENSE THEIR PRESENCE... NINE IN ALL!
THEN THE TIME HAS COME MY BRETHREN... THE FINAL BATTLE IN OUR HOLY WAR TO CLAIM THIS WORLD IN MAGNUS' NAME!
BUT LET THE ACOLYTES DRAW FIRST BLOOD. BRING ME THE WOMAN, JAVITZ!
IF THE NEOPHYTE REVEALS MY SECRET-- BETRAYS ME--WORD OF MY ACTIONS WILL SURELY TURN MY FOLLOWERS AGAINST ME!
MY ONLY HOPE--TO PREVENT THE X-MEN FROM CONVINCING THE ACOLYTES OF MY HAND IN MAGNETO'S DEATH-- IS TO RAISE THE STAKES.
I'VE OFTEN WONDERED HOW MY MUTANT ABILITY WOULD EFFECT A FLATSCAN!
¿URN¿
WOMP
AFTER THE X-MEN HAVE FOUND YOUR LIFELESS HUSK--
--MAYBE THEY WILL LET ME KNOW THE FINAL RESULTS?

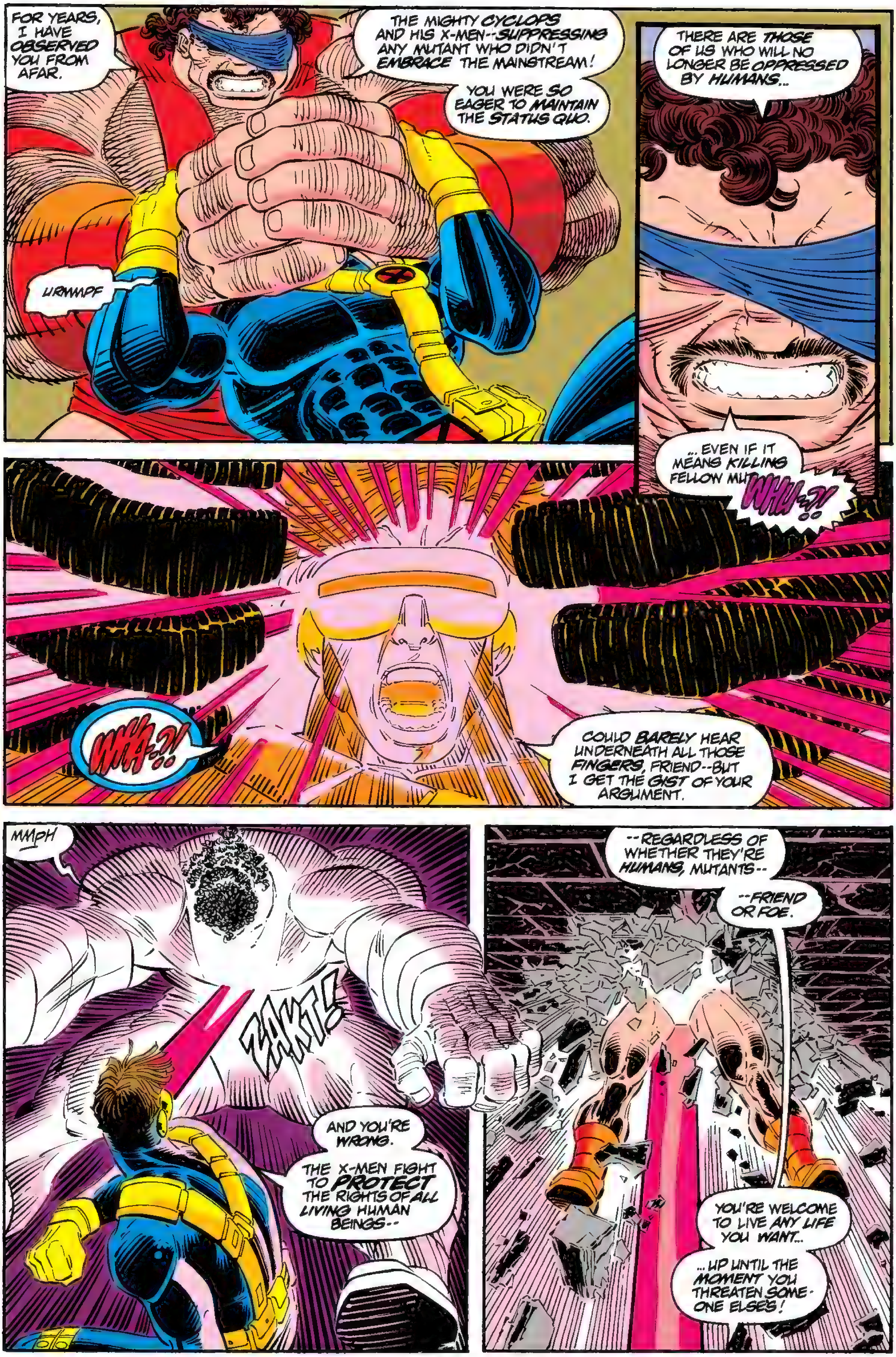

SPEAKING FOR MYSELF-- I ENJOY THE SUSPENSE!
A VARIATION ON THEME, EH-- MEIN FREUND?
THIS TIME I HIT THEM HIGH
AND YOU HIT THEM LOW!
GKAK!
BUT COLOSSUS DOES NOT REPLY--
THERE'S NO WAY THEY COULD HAVE GOTTEN SO FAR-- SO QUICKLY-- WITHOUT HELP!
-- AT LEAST, NOT IN WORDS.
FOR THOUGH HE STANDS AND FIGHTS THIS DAY, HIS HEART IS NOT IN THE WINNING OR THE LOSING.
IT IS INVESTED IN THE HOPES AND DREAMS OF A LITTLE GIRL SOME THREE THOUSAND MILES AWAY, ACROSS THE SEA...
I DON'T BELIEVE ANYONE EVER ACCUSED THE X-MEN OF TURNING DOWN A HAND.
AH, THE KLEINSTOCK BROTHERS, IN YOUR NATIVE SWISS...
...GUTEN MORGEN.
CONSIDERING WHAT HAPPENED LAST TIME MS. GREY SLAMMED THE TWO OF YOU TOGETHER--*
-- YOU'LL UNDERSTAND IF I OPT TO TAKE YOU OUT IN A SINGLE BLAST.
*UNCANNY #298.--Bob

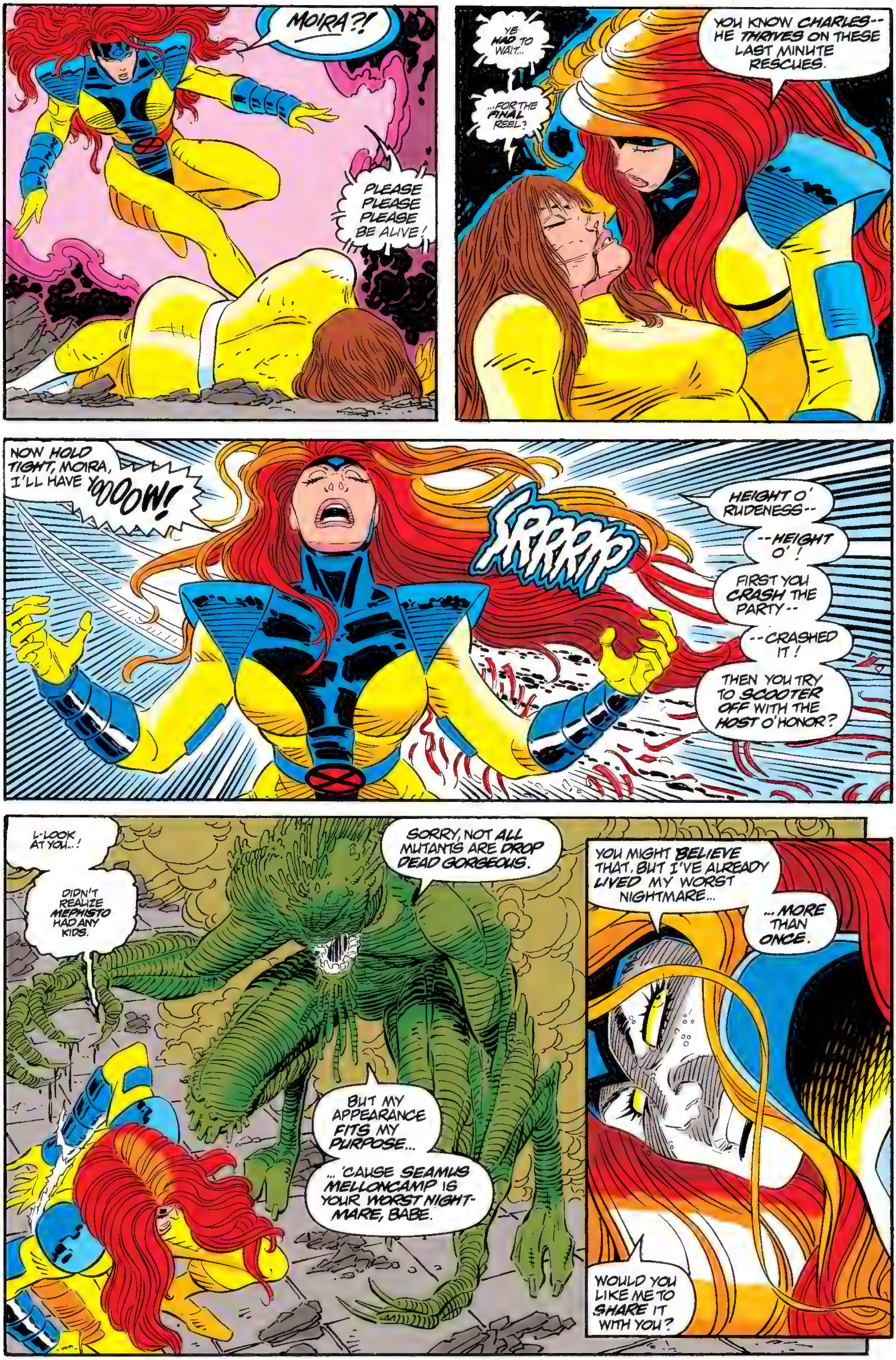

LISTEN TO YOU, BISHOP-- YOU FINALLY GET TO DRAW ON YOUR PAST EXPERIENCES IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY--
--AND SUDDENLY YOU'RE AN EXPERT ON ALL THINGS ACOLYTAL.
"ACOLYTAL", SNOWBALL?
HANK ASSURED ME IT WAS A WORD.
HANK LIED!
GUYS-- PLEASE!
JEAN IS CORRECT. TOTAL CONCENTRATION IS PARAMOUNT.
WE HAVE NEVER FACED A GROUP THIS FOCUSED-- THIS FANATIC.
THEY SEEM MORE THAN WILLING TO DIE FOR THEIR CAUSE.
WORKS OUT FINE-- I'M MORE THAN WILLIN' TO ACCOMODATE 'EM!
BAMF
THE CHILD--?!
HE'S DONE HIS PART-- LET HIM GO!
WHILE THE OTHERS ARE DISTRACTED, I CAN FULFILL ME SACRED RESPONSIBILITY..
... TO SIPHON THE MEMORIES OF WHAT YOU DID TO OUR LORD AND MAAAAAAHH!
THE DOCTOR HAS BEEN THROUGH ENOUGH...
...LEAVE HER ALONE.
BUT MILAN CANNOT HEAR WARREN'S WORDS OVER THE SOUNDS OF HIS OWN SCREAM!
SIMILARLY, THE SOUND OF SHATTERING GLASS--
--JOINS THE CACAPHONY WHICH ROCKS THIS ANCIENT BUILDING TO ITS CORE!
AS THE BANK OF MONITORS EXPLODES, THE INFORMATION THE MUTANT GATHERED--
--THE LIFE AND TIMES OF MOIRA MACTAGGERT...
... IS LOST TO THE ACOLYTES, FOREVER!
CORTEZ IS EAGER TO EXTRICATE HIMSELF FROM HIS FOLLOWERS, WITHOUT SO MUCH AS A BY YOUR LEAVE.
HARDLY THE LEADERSHIP QUALITIES I ADMIRE MOST IN A PERSON.
COULD IT BE HIS AGENDA FAR EXCEEDS HIS ASPIRATIONS AS AN ACOLYTE?

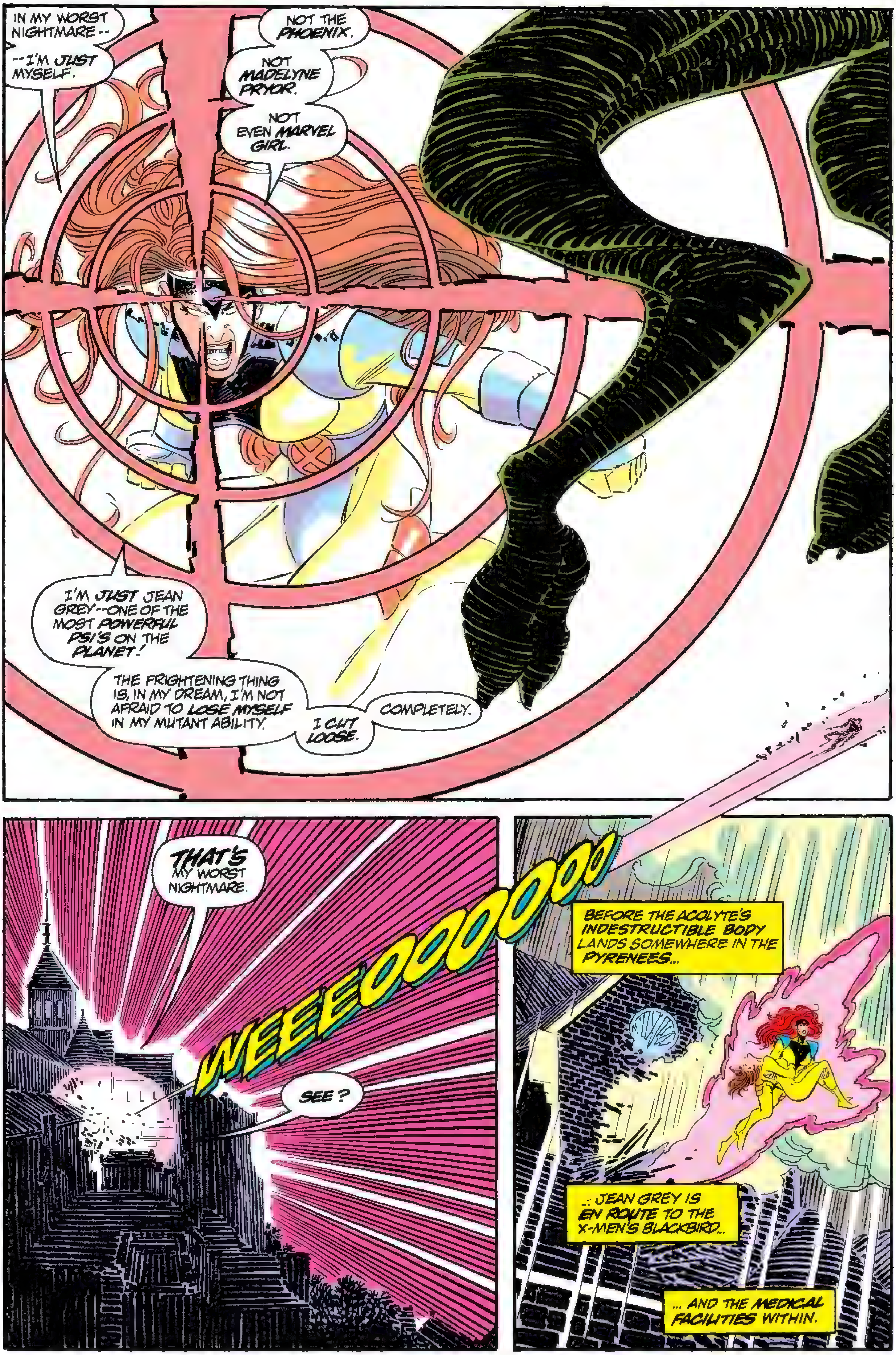

LESS THAN A WEEK SINCE WE NEARLY KILLED YOU, ARCH-ANGEL...
... AND YOU'RE FOOLISH ENOUGH TO AGAIN OPPOSE OUR WILL?
TOOK IT AS... LUCKY OMEN
WHAP
WARREN, I AM HERE--
--RELAX! GO LIMP!
NO PROB THERE, ELF.
FEEL LIKE UNUSICONES
PSIONIC EXO-SKEL
CLOSED DOWN MY NERVE SYNAPSES.
PLEASE... ENOUGH...
HARDLY ENOUGH, ACOLYTE!
YOU AND YOUR BRETHREN HAVE BEGUN A REIGN OF TERROR THAT-- ¿uhh¿?!
--THAT WILL CONTINUE LONG AFTER I'VE CRUSHED YOUR METAL FRAME IN MY PSYCHIC GRIP!

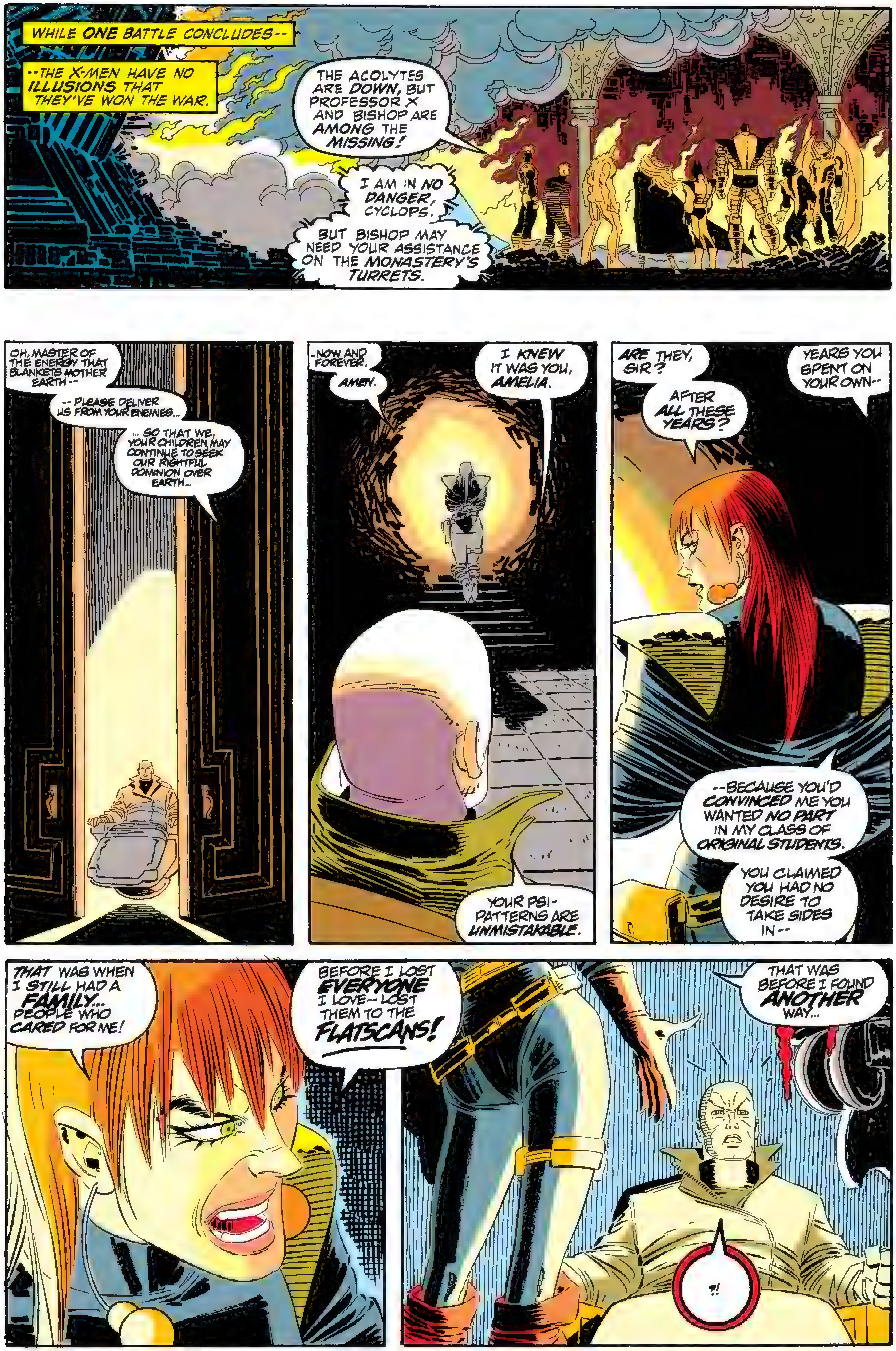

I'M AFRAID YOU ARE AS *SHORT* ON *POWER*--
--AS YOU ARE ON *COMPASSION*, *UNUSCIONE*.
AARGH!
PERHAPS I SHOULD SHOW *YOU* THE SAME MERCY YOU PREPARED TO SHOWER UPON THE *CHILDREN* OF MIDDLEBOROUGH...?
YO, "TOVARSICH"!
EH?
WE COULD USE A *HAND* OVER HERE--ORGANIC, *STEEL* OR OTHERWISE!
ARCHANGEL IS TOO WEAK, I DON'T DARE RISK *'PORTING* HIM.

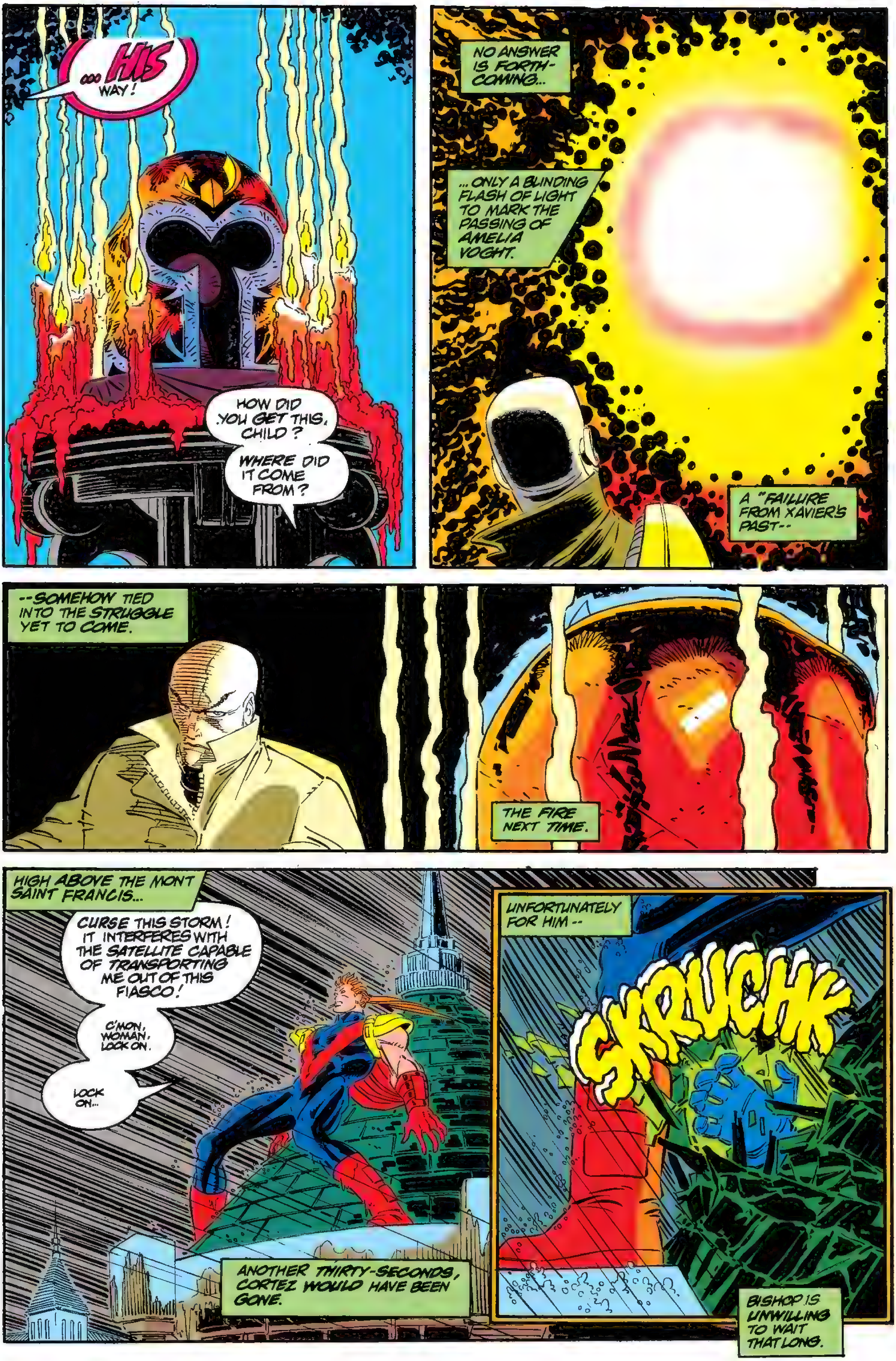

I'M ON MY WAY, KURT...
COMPROMISING MY DESIRES IN PLACE OF MY RESPONSIBILITY.
AGAIN.
PATHETIC!
YOU'RE AS MUCH A WASTE OF A MUTANT-GENE AS YOU WERE WHEN YOU FOUNDED X-FACTOR.
WOMP!
THOSE WERE THE DAYS, HUH?
I, ON THE OTHER HAND, AM STRONGER!
I FOUND ACCEPTANCE...
...WHAT?
WW--
WHA--?
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
ADAPTING.
FWOMMP!
Y'SEE, THE LAST TIME I WAS BEATEN THIS SEVERELY WAS BY MIKHAIL RASPUTIN--*
--WHO SHOWED ME THERE WAS A LOT MORE TO MY ICE POWER THAN I REALIZED.
*UNCANNY #291.--Bob
I HAVEN'T HAD THE OPPORTUNITY--OR THE REASON--TO BE AGGRESSIVELY CREATIVE.
UNTIL NOW.
SO, WHO'S NEXT?

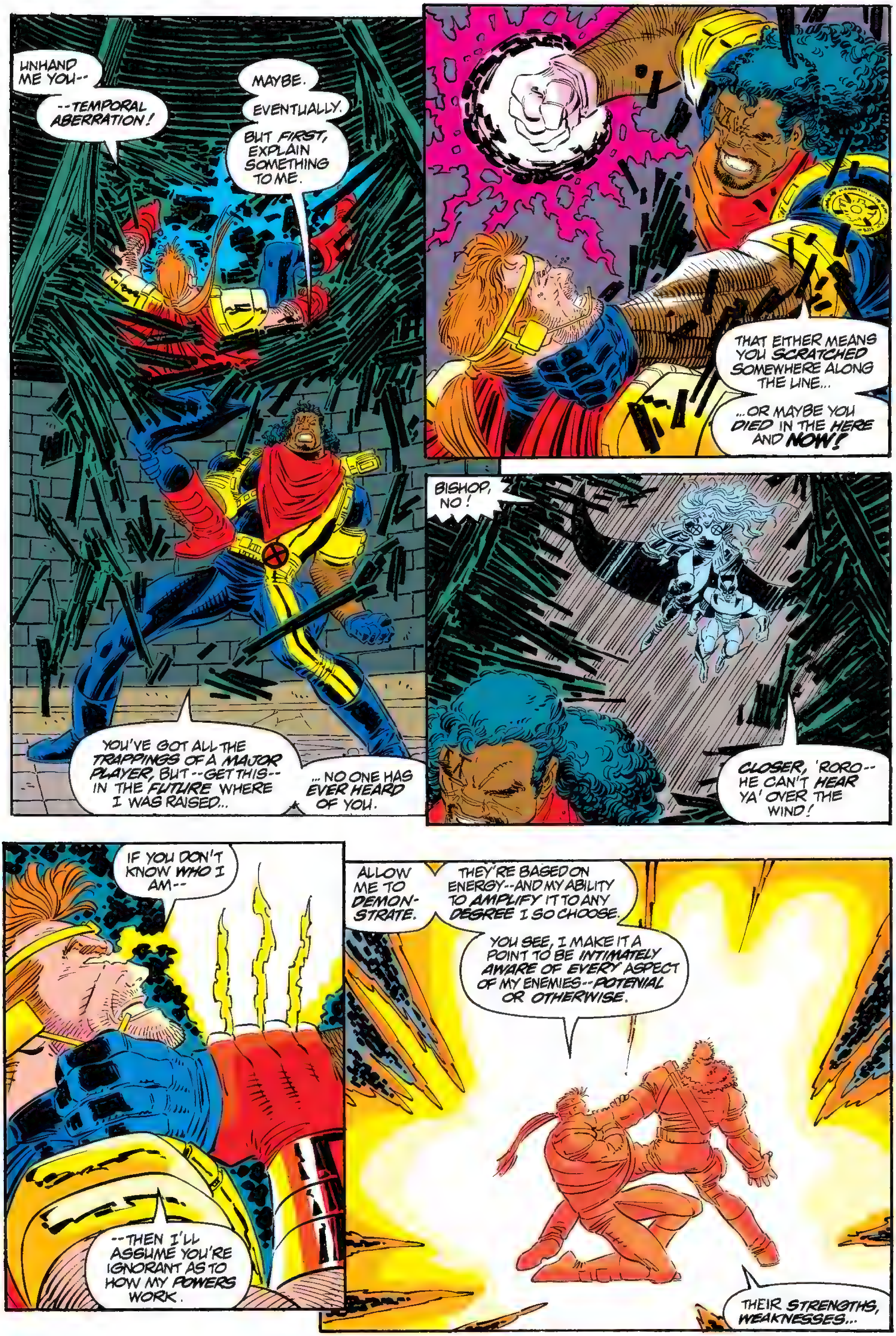

FOR YEARS, I HAVE OBSERVED YOU FROM AFAR.
THE MIGHTY CYCLOPS AND HIS X-MEN--SUPPRESSING ANY MUTANT WHO DIDN'T EMBRACE THE MAINSTREAM!
YOU WERE SO EAGER TO MAINTAIN THE STATUS QUO.
URMMPF
THERE ARE THOSE OF US WHO WILL NO LONGER BE OPPRESSED BY HUMANS...
...EVEN IF IT MEANS KILLING FELLOW MU
WHU--?!
WHA--?!
COULD BARELY HEAR UNDERNEATH ALL THOSE FINGERS, FRIEND--BUT I GET THE GIST OF YOUR ARGUMENT.
MMPH
ZAKT!
AND YOU'RE WRONG.
THE X-MEN FIGHT TO PROTECT THE RIGHTS OF ALL LIVING HUMAN BEINGS--
--REGARDLESS OF WHETHER THEY'RE HUMANS, MUTANTS--
--FRIEND OR FOE.
YOU'RE WELCOME TO LIVE ANY LIFE YOU WANT...
...UP UNTIL THE MOMENT YOU THREATEN SOMEONE ELSE'S!

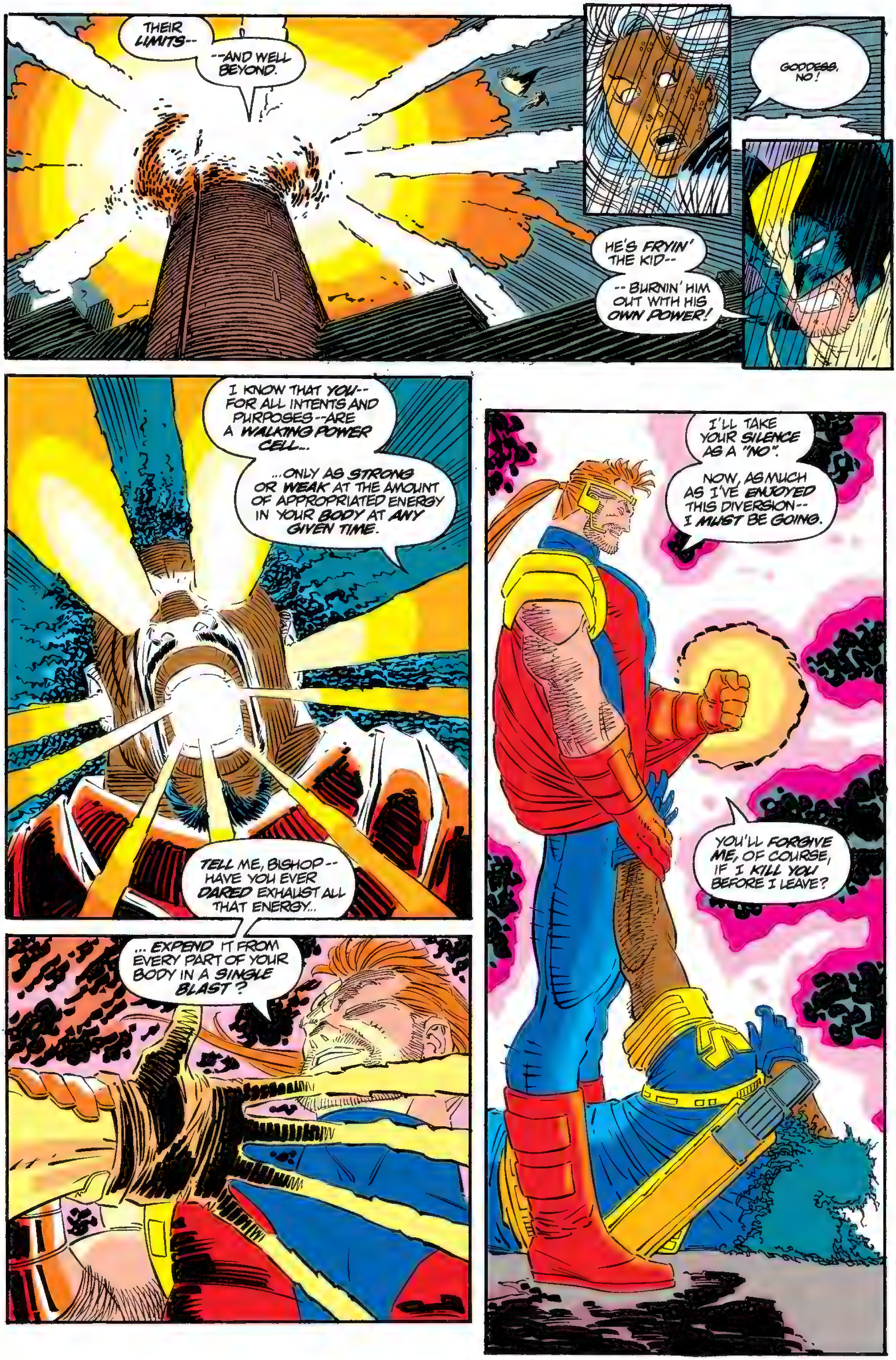

MOIRA?!
PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE BE ALIVE!
YE HAD TO WAIT...
...FOR THE FINAL REEL?
YOU KNOW CHARLES-- HE THRIVES ON THESE LAST MINUTE RESCUES.
NOW HOLD TIGHT, MOIRA, I'LL HAVE YOOOW!
SKRRRIP
HEIGHT O' RUDENESS--
--HEIGHT O'!
FIRST YOU CRASH THE PARTY--
--CRASHED IT!
THEN YOU TRY TO SCOOTER OFF WITH THE HOST O'HONOR?
L-LOOK AT YOU...!
DIDN'T REALIZE MEPHISTO HAD ANY KIDS.
SORRY, NOT ALL MUTANTS ARE DROP DEAD GORGEOUS.
BUT MY APPEARANCE FITS MY PURPOSE...
...'CAUSE SEAMUS MELLONCAMP IS YOUR WORST NIGHTMARE, BABE.
YOU MIGHT BELIEVE THAT. BUT I'VE ALREADY LIVED MY WORST NIGHTMARE...
...MORE THAN ONCE.
WOULD YOU LIKE ME TO SHARE IT WITH YOU?

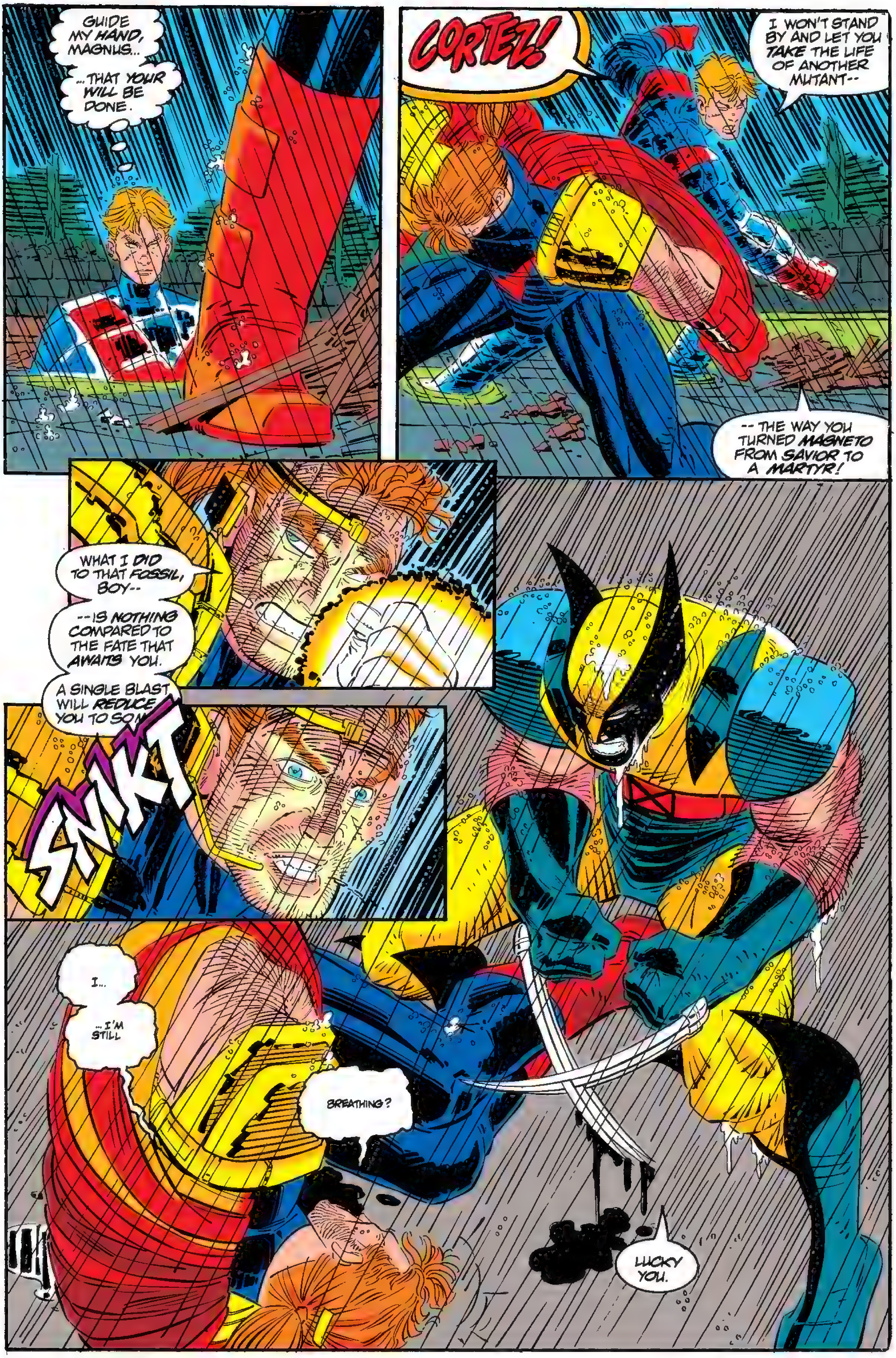

IN MY WORST NIGHTMARE--
--I'M JUST MYSELF.
NOT THE PHOENIX.
NOT MADELYNE PRYOR.
NOT EVEN MARVEL GIRL.
I'M JUST JEAN GREY--ONE OF THE MOST POWERFUL PSI'S ON THE PLANET!
THE FRIGHTENING THING IS, IN MY DREAM, I'M NOT AFRAID TO LOSE MYSELF IN MY MUTANT ABILITY.
I CUT LOOSE.
COMPLETELY.
THAT'S MY WORST NIGHTMARE.
WEEEOOOOOO
SEE?
BEFORE THE ACOLYTE'S INDESTRUCTIBLE BODY LANDS SOMEWHERE IN THE PYRENEES...
...JEAN GREY IS EN ROUTE TO THE X-MEN'S BLACKBIRD...
... AND THE MEDICAL FACILITIES WITHIN.

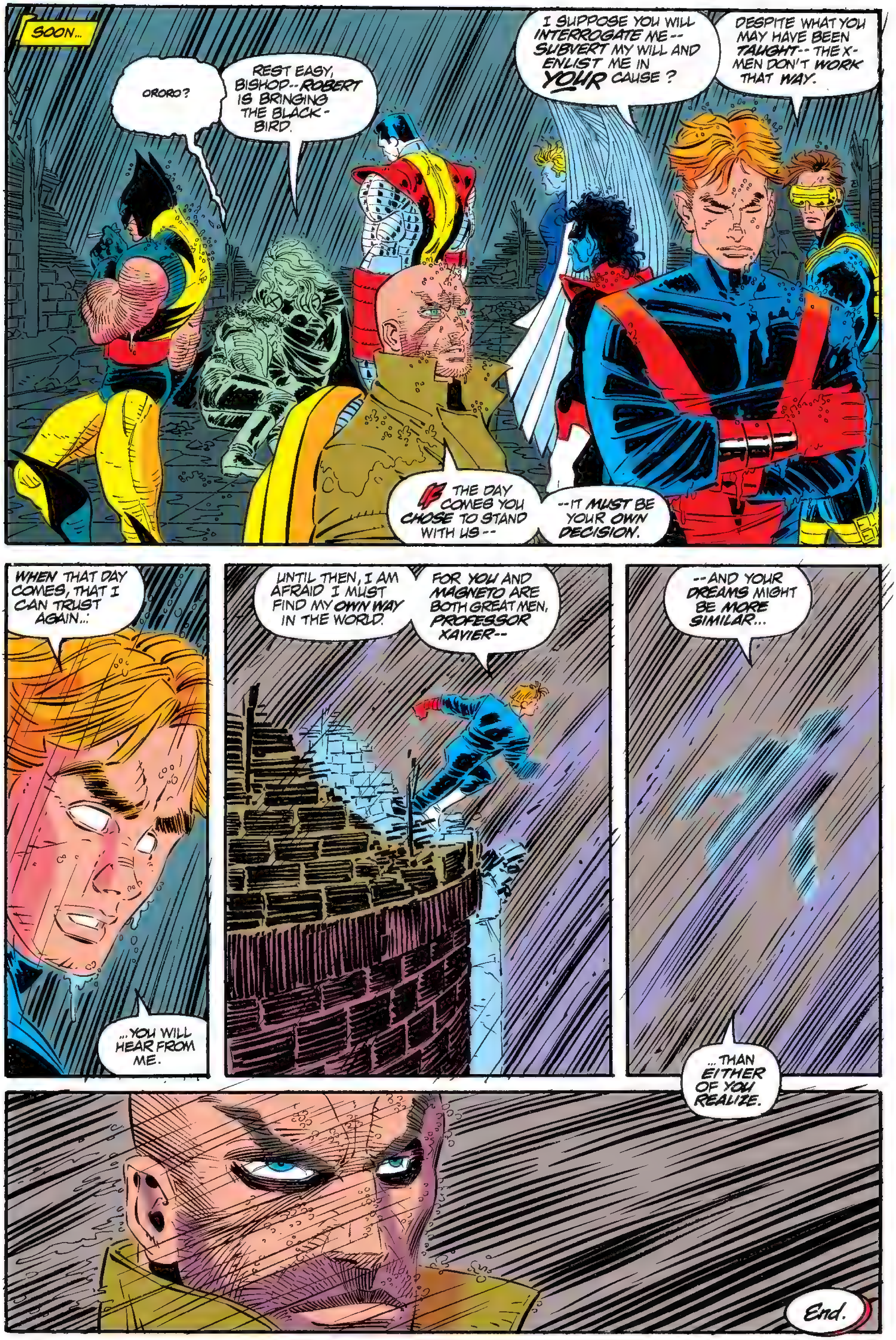

WHILE ONE BATTLE CONCLUDES--
--THE X-MEN HAVE NO ILLUSIONS THAT THEY'VE WON THE WAR.
THE ACOLYTES ARE DOWN, BUT PROFESSOR X AND BISHOP ARE AMONG THE MISSING!
I AM IN NO DANGER, CYCLOPS.
BUT BISHOP MAY NEED YOUR ASSISTANCE ON THE MONASTERY'S TURRETS.
OH, MASTER OF THE ENERGY THAT BLANKETS MOTHER EARTH--
--PLEASE DELIVER US FROM YOUR ENEMIES...
...SO THAT WE, YOUR CHILDREN, MAY CONTINUE TO SEEK OUR RIGHTFUL DOMINION OVER EARTH...
--NOW AND FOREVER.
AMEN.
I KNEW IT WAS YOU, AMELIA.
YOUR PSI-PATTERNS ARE UNMISTAKABLE.
ARE THEY, SIR?
AFTER ALL THESE YEARS?
YEARS YOU SPENT ON YOUR OWN--
--BECAUSE YOU'D CONVINCED ME YOU WANTED NO PART IN MY CLASS OF ORIGINAL STUDENTS.
YOU CLAIMED YOU HAD NO DESIRE TO TAKE SIDES IN--
THAT WAS WHEN I STILL HAD A FAMILY... PEOPLE WHO CARED FOR ME!
BEFORE I LOST EVERYONE I LOVE--LOST THEM TO THE FLATSCANS!
THAT WAS BEFORE I FOUND ANOTHER WAY...
?!


...HIS WAY!
HOW DID YOU GET THIS, CHILD?
WHERE DID IT COME FROM?
NO ANSWER IS FORTHCOMING...
...ONLY A BLINDING FLASH OF LIGHT TO MARK THE PASSING OF AMELIA VOGHT.
A "FAILURE FROM XAVIER'S PAST--
--SOMEHOW TIED INTO THE STRUGGLE YET TO COME.
THE FIRE NEXT TIME.
HIGH ABOVE THE MONT SAINT FRANCIS...
CURSE THIS STORM! IT INTERFERES WITH THE SATELLITE CAPABLE OF TRANSPORTING ME OUT OF THIS FIASCO!
C'MON, WOMAN, LOCK ON.
LOCK ON...
ANOTHER THIRTY-SECONDS, CORTEZ WOULD HAVE BEEN GONE.
UNFORTUNATELY FOR HIM --
SKRUCHK
BISHOP IS UNWILLING TO WAIT THAT LONG.

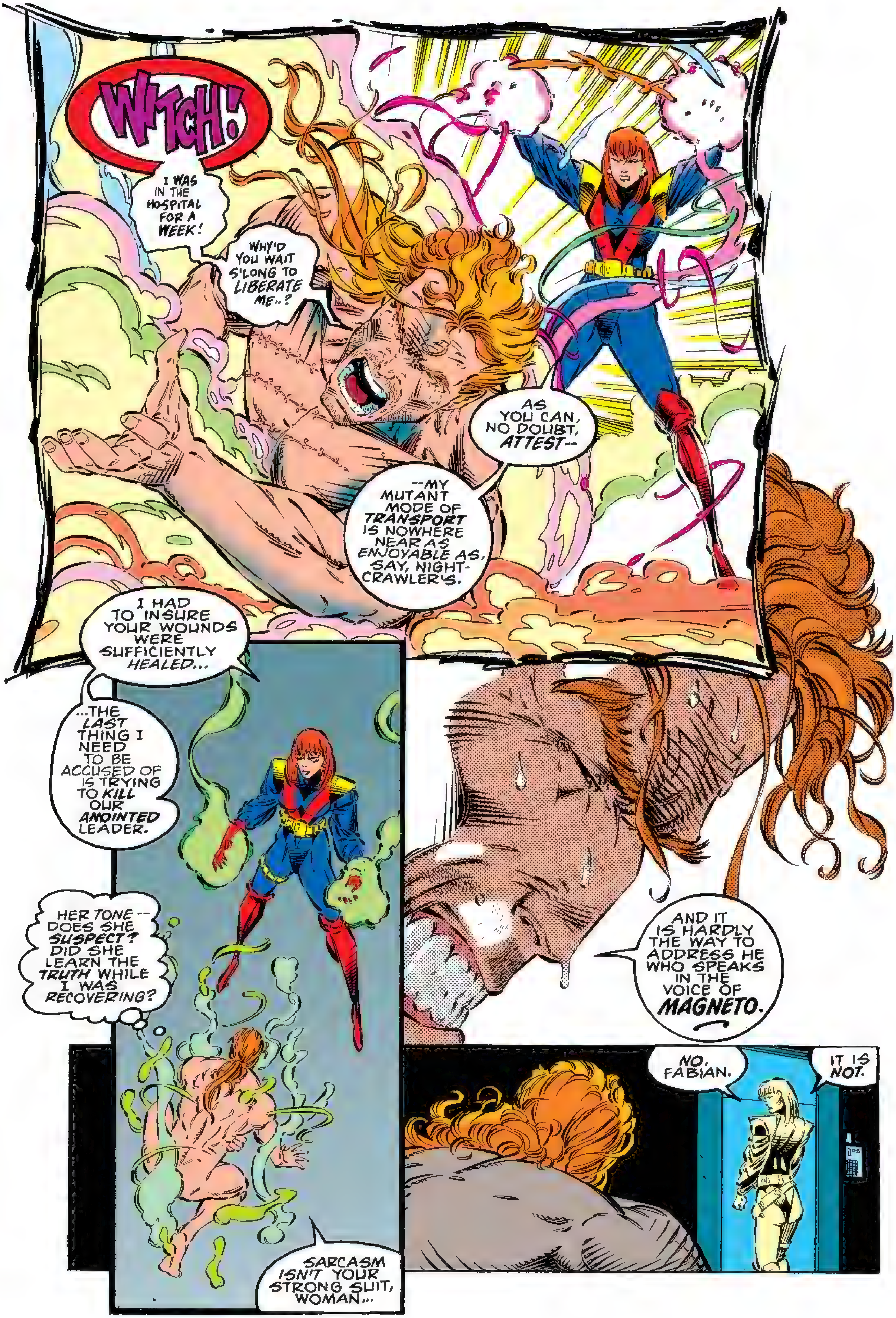

UNHAND ME YOU--
--TEMPORAL ABERRATION!
MAYBE.
EVENTUALLY.
BUT FIRST, EXPLAIN SOMETHING TO ME.
YOU'VE GOT ALL THE TRAPPINGS OF A MAJOR PLAYER, BUT--GET THIS--IN THE FUTURE WHERE I WAS RAISED...
...NO ONE HAS EVER HEARD OF YOU.
THAT EITHER MEANS YOU SCRATCHED SOMEWHERE ALONG THE LINE...
...OR MAYBE YOU DIED IN THE HERE AND NOW!
BISHOP, NO!
CLOSER, 'RORO--HE CAN'T HEAR YA' OVER THE WIND!
IF YOU DON'T KNOW WHO I AM--
--THEN I'LL ASSUME YOU'RE IGNORANT AS TO HOW MY POWERS WORK.
ALLOW ME TO DEMONSTRATE.
THEY'RE BASED ON ENERGY--AND MY ABILITY TO AMPLIFY IT TO ANY DEGREE I SO CHOOSE.
YOU SEE, I MAKE IT A POINT TO BE INTIMATELY AWARE OF EVERY ASPECT OF MY ENEMIES--POTENIAL OR OTHERWISE.
THEIR STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES...


THEIR LIMITS--
--AND WELL BEYOND.
GODDESS, NO!
HE'S FRYIN' THE KID--
-- BURNIN' HIM OUT WITH HIS OWN POWER!
I KNOW THAT YOU-- FOR ALL INTENTS AND PURPOSES--ARE A WALKING POWER CELL...
...ONLY AS STRONG OR WEAK AT THE AMOUNT OF APPROPRIATED ENERGY IN YOUR BODY AT ANY GIVEN TIME.
TELL ME, BISHOP-- HAVE YOU EVER DARED EXHAUST ALL THAT ENERGY...
... EXPEND IT FROM EVERY PART OF YOUR BODY IN A SINGLE BLAST?
I'LL TAKE YOUR SILENCE AS A "NO".
NOW, AS MUCH AS I'VE ENJOYED THIS DIVERSION-- I MUST BE GOING.
YOU'LL FORGIVE ME, OF COURSE, IF I KILL YOU BEFORE I LEAVE?


GUIDE MY HAND, MAGNUS...
...THAT YOUR WILL BE DONE.
CORTEZ!
I WON'T STAND BY AND LET YOU TAKE THE LIFE OF ANOTHER MUTANT--
-- THE WAY YOU TURNED MAGNETO FROM SAVIOR TO A MARTYR!
WHAT I DID TO THAT FOSSIL, BOY--
--IS NOTHING COMPARED TO THE FATE THAT AWAITS YOU.
A SINGLE BLAST WILL REDUCE YOU TO SOM
SNIKT
I...
...I'M STILL
BREATHING?
LUCKY YOU.


SOON...
ORORO?
REST EASY, BISHOP--ROBERT IS BRINGING THE BLACKBIRD.
I SUPPOSE YOU WILL INTERROGATE ME--SUBVERT MY WILL AND ENLIST ME IN YOUR CAUSE?
DESPITE WHAT YOU MAY HAVE BEEN TAUGHT--THE X-MEN DON'T WORK THAT WAY.
IF THE DAY COMES YOU CHOSE TO STAND WITH US--
--IT MUST BE YOUR OWN DECISION.
WHEN THAT DAY COMES, THAT I CAN TRUST AGAIN...:
...YOU WILL HEAR FROM ME.
UNTIL THEN, I AM AFRAID I MUST FIND MY OWN WAY IN THE WORLD.
FOR YOU AND MAGNETO ARE BOTH GREAT MEN, PROFESSOR XAVIER--
--AND YOUR DREAMS MIGHT BE MORE SIMILAR...
...THAN EITHER OF YOU REALIZE.
End.

FABIAN CORTEZ ALWAYS BELIEVED HIMSELF TO BE ABOVE PETTY SENSATIONS SUCH AS PAIN.
WRITHING ABOUT IN AGONY WAS FOR LESSER BEINGS... FOR HUMANS.
THAT WAS BEFORE WOLVERINE.
BEFORE COLD, HARD ADAMANTIUM PIERCED HIS CHEST-- PUNCTURING THE HEATED CAVITY WHICH HOUSED HIS FRAGILE LUNGS.
CERTAINLY, IT WAS BEFORE HE FOUND HIMSELF IN THE GRIP OF VOGHT'S TRANSUBSTANTIATION PROCESS.
EPILOG
SCOTT LOBDELL -- SCRIPT
BRANDON PETERSON -- PENCILS
DAN PANOSIAN -- INKS: PAGES 1-4
AL MILGROM -- INKS: PAGES 5-8
RICHARD STARKINGS -- LETTERS
GLYNIS OLIVER -- COLORS
IT WILL HURT LESS IF YOU CEASE YOUR STRUGGLES.
YOU ARE ALMOST HERE M'LORD.


WITCH!
I WAS IN THE HOSPITAL FOR A *WEEK!*
WHY'D YOU WAIT S'LONG TO *LIBERATE* ME..?
AS YOU CAN, NO DOUBT, *ATTEST*--
--MY MUTANT MODE OF *TRANSPORT* IS NOWHERE NEAR AS ENJOYABLE AS, SAY, NIGHTCRAWLER'S.
I HAD TO INSURE YOUR WOUNDS WERE SUFFICIENTLY *HEALED*...
...THE *LAST* THING I NEED TO BE ACCUSED OF IS TRYING TO ***KILL*** OUR ***ANOINTED*** LEADER.
HER TONE -- DOES SHE ***SUSPECT?*** DID SHE LEARN THE ***TRUTH*** WHILE I WAS *RECOVERING?*
SARCASM *ISN'T* YOUR STRONG SUIT, WOMAN...
AND IT IS HARDLY THE WAY TO ADDRESS HE WHO SPEAKS IN THE VOICE OF ***MAGNETO.***
NO, FABIAN.
IT IS *NOT.*

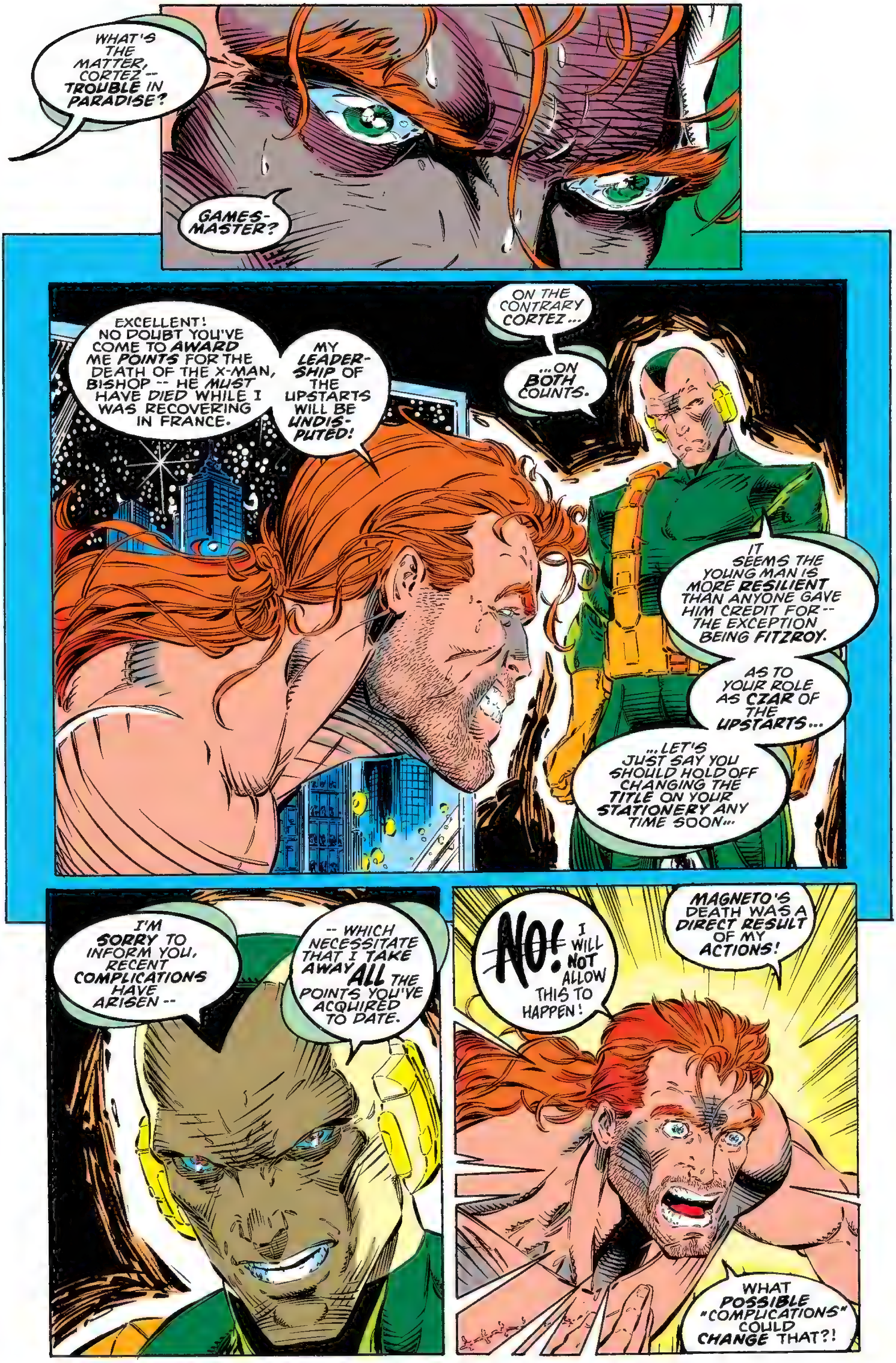
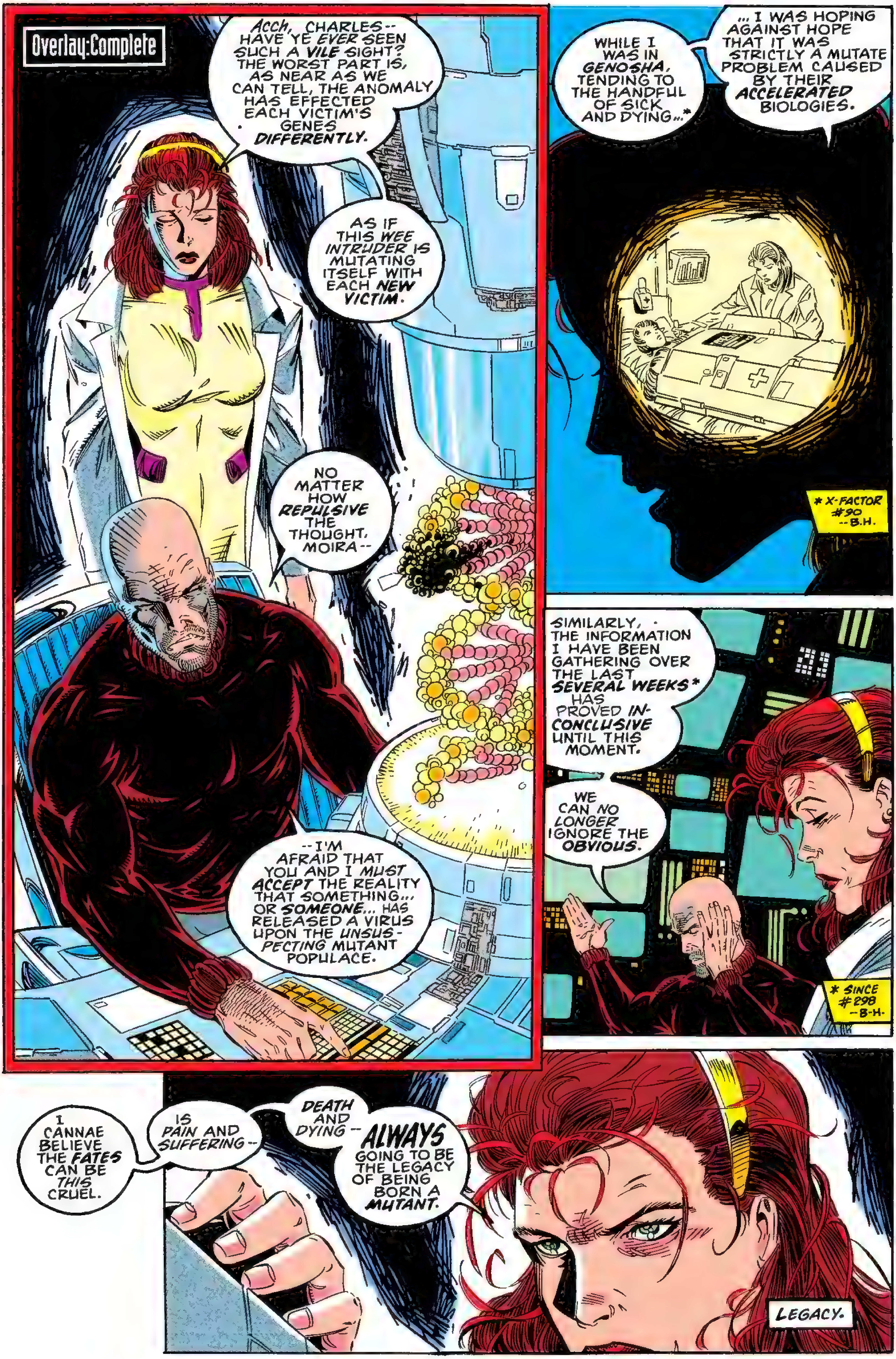
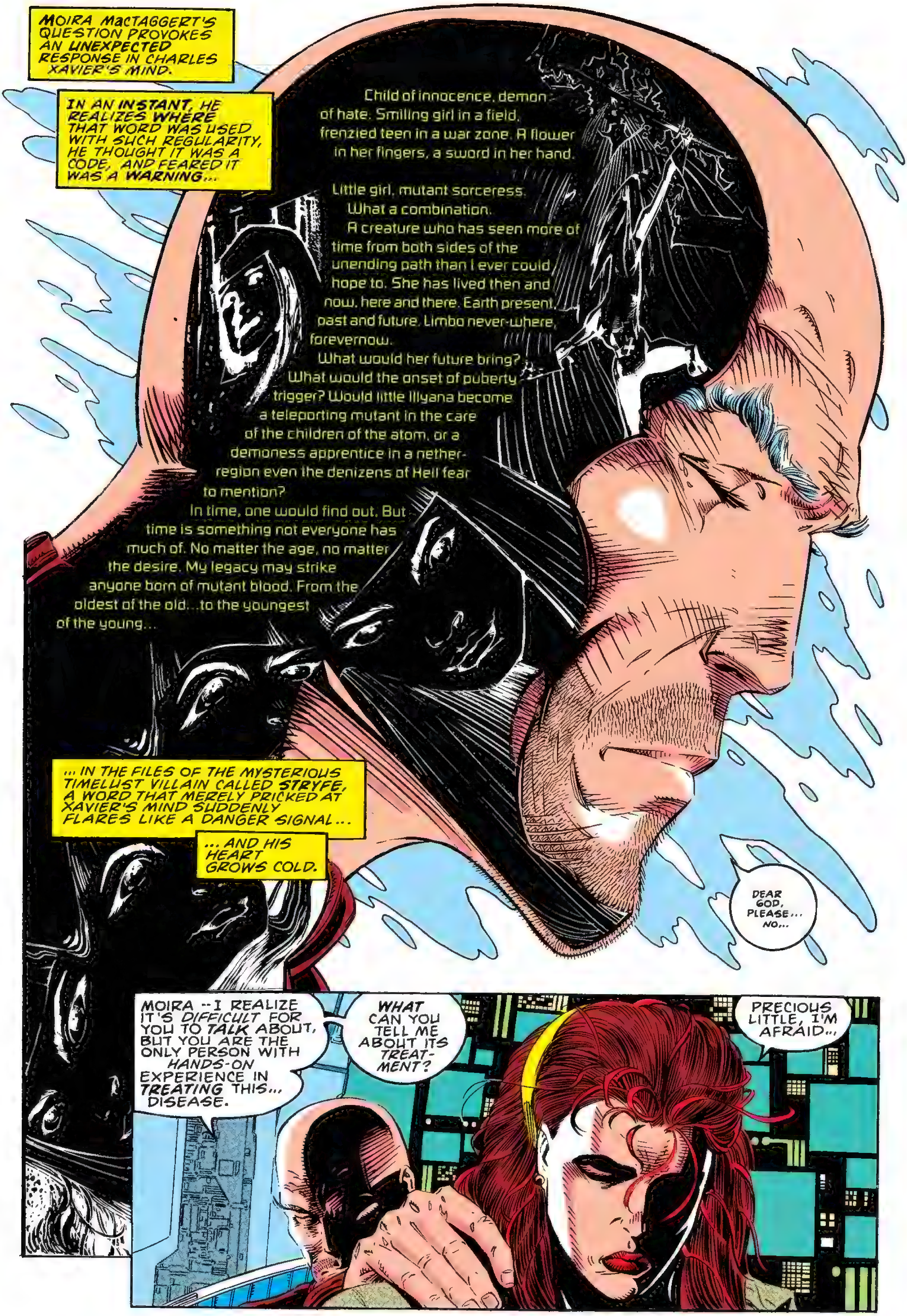
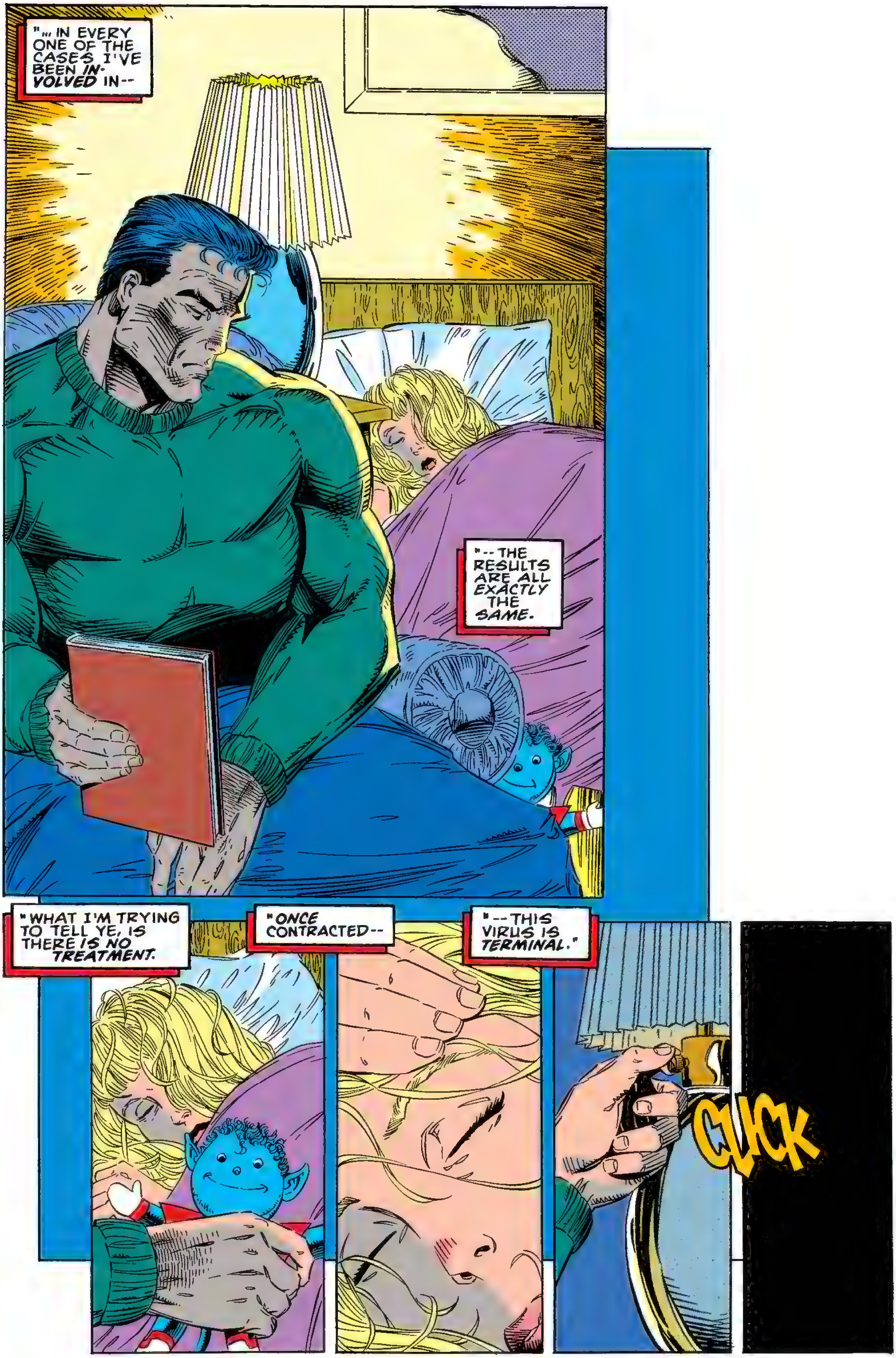

WHAT'S THE MATTER, CORTEZ -- TROUBLE IN PARADISE?
GAMES-MASTER?
EXCELLENT! NO DOUBT YOU'VE COME TO AWARD ME POINTS FOR THE DEATH OF THE X-MAN, BISHOP -- HE MUST HAVE DIED WHILE I WAS RECOVERING IN FRANCE.
MY LEADERSHIP OF THE UPSTARTS WILL BE UNDISPUTED!
ON THE CONTRARY CORTEZ...
...ON BOTH COUNTS.
IT SEEMS THE YOUNG MAN IS MORE RESILIENT THAN ANYONE GAVE HIM CREDIT FOR -- THE EXCEPTION BEING FITZROY.
AS TO YOUR ROLE AS CZAR OF THE UPSTARTS...
...LET'S JUST SAY YOU SHOULD HOLD OFF CHANGING THE TITLE ON YOUR STATIONERY ANY TIME SOON...
I'M SORRY TO INFORM YOU, RECENT COMPLICATIONS HAVE ARISEN --
-- WHICH NECESSITATE THAT I TAKE AWAY ALL THE POINTS YOU'VE ACQUIRED TO DATE.
NO! I WILL NOT ALLOW THIS TO HAPPEN!
MAGNETO'S DEATH WAS A DIRECT RESULT OF MY ACTIONS!
WHAT POSSIBLE "COMPLICATIONS" COULD CHANGE THAT?!

FIGURE IT OUT FOR YOURSELF...
DON'T FADE AWAY ON ME WHILE I'M SPEAKING TO YOU!
I'M NOT LIKE THE REST OF THE UPSTARTS!
I WAS BORN ROYALTY -- AND I WILL NOT BE DISMISSED LIKE A BOTHERSOME CHILD!
CURSE HIM!
WITH MY HOLD OVER THE ACOLYTES GROWING MORE TENUOUS BY THE MOMENT --
-- MY DOMINION OVER THE UPSTARTS IS NO LONGER AN AMUSING DIVERSION...
... IT IS NOW A MATTER OF SALVATION!
HOW COULD I POSSIBLY LOSE THE POINTS FOR MAGNUS'S DEATH, UNLESS..?
...
NOOO!
SKRASH

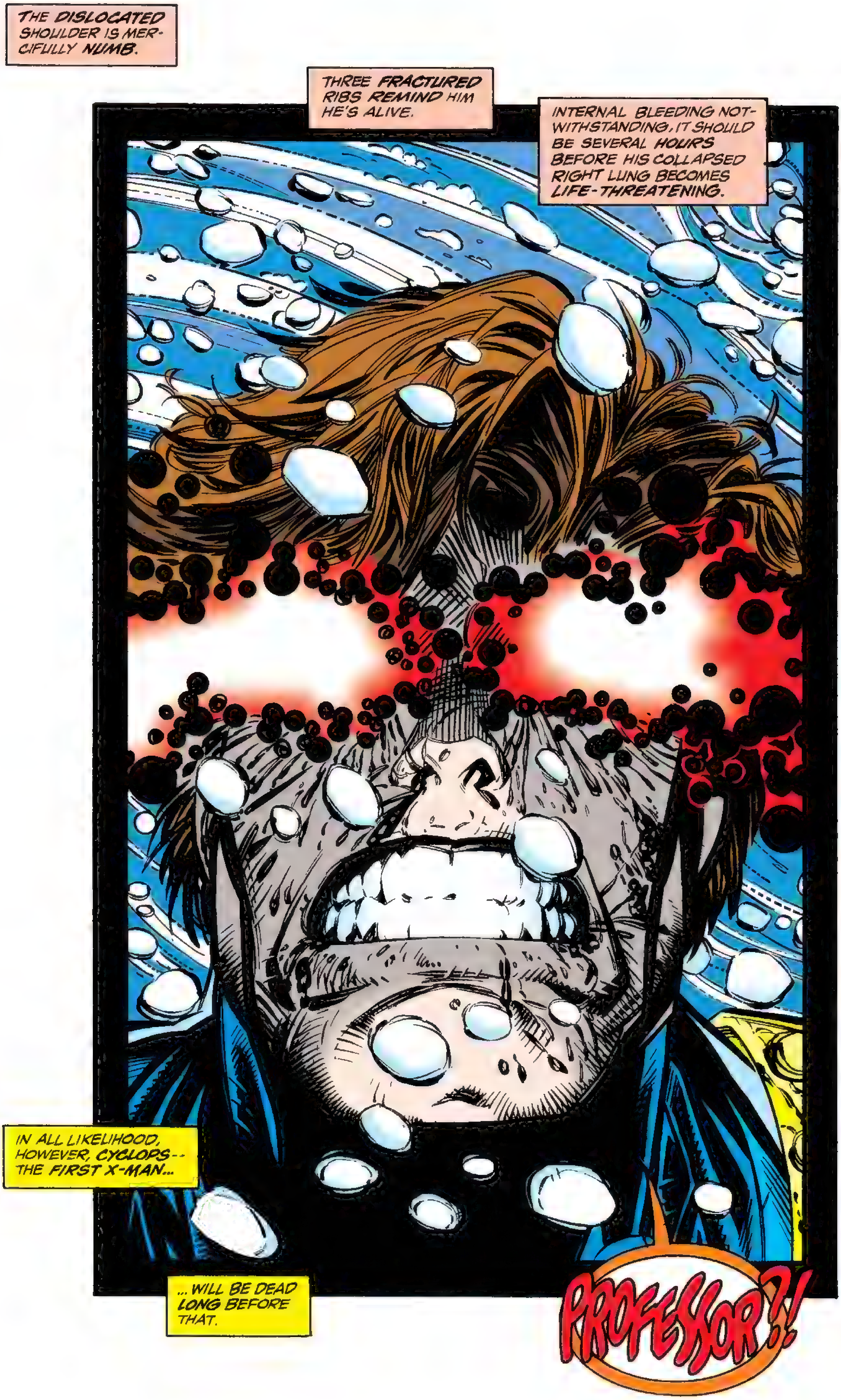
PROFESSOR XAVIER'S SCHOOL FOR GIFTED YOUNGSTERS.
SALEM CENTER.
WESTCHESTER COUNTY.
NEW YORK.
THERE WAS A TIME WHEN THIS MANSION SERVED AS A TRAINING FACILITY FOR THE YOUNG MUTANTS KNOWN AS THE UNCANNY X-MEN.
SOMETIME BETWEEN THEN AND NOW, IT BECAME THEIR HOME.
I'LL CONFESS, CHARLES, I DIDNA KNOW THIS "READY ROOM" OF YUIR'S EVEN EXISTED. AND I POSED AS YUIR HOUSEKEEPER FOR NOT A SHORT AMOUNT O' TIME.
UNTIL RECENTLY, I DEEMED THIS ROOM OFF-LIMITS TO EVERYONE BUT MYSELF -- JUSTIFIED, I BELIEVED, BY THE OCCASIONAL NEED TO ESCAPE.
AT JUBILEE'S INSISTENCE I BECOME... AS SHE PUT IT "MORE NINETIES"... I'M TRYING TO MAKE MYSELF MORE ACCESSIBLE.
I'M IMPRESSED -- EVEN MORE SO BY THIS SHI'AR TECHNOLOGY YE HAVE AT YUIR DISPOSAL.
BY INPUTTING ALL THE PERTINENT DATA ON THE ANOMALY... WE'VE MANAGED TO PIECE TOGETHER FROM THE MEDICAL REPORTS AND EXAMS ON VICTIMS OF THIS GENETIC DISORDER --
-- WE'VE COME UP WITH AN AMALGAMATED-HOLOGRAPHIC PROJECTION OF AN AFFLICTED DNA HELIX.
COMPUTER: OVERLAY MUTAGENIC ANOMALY.

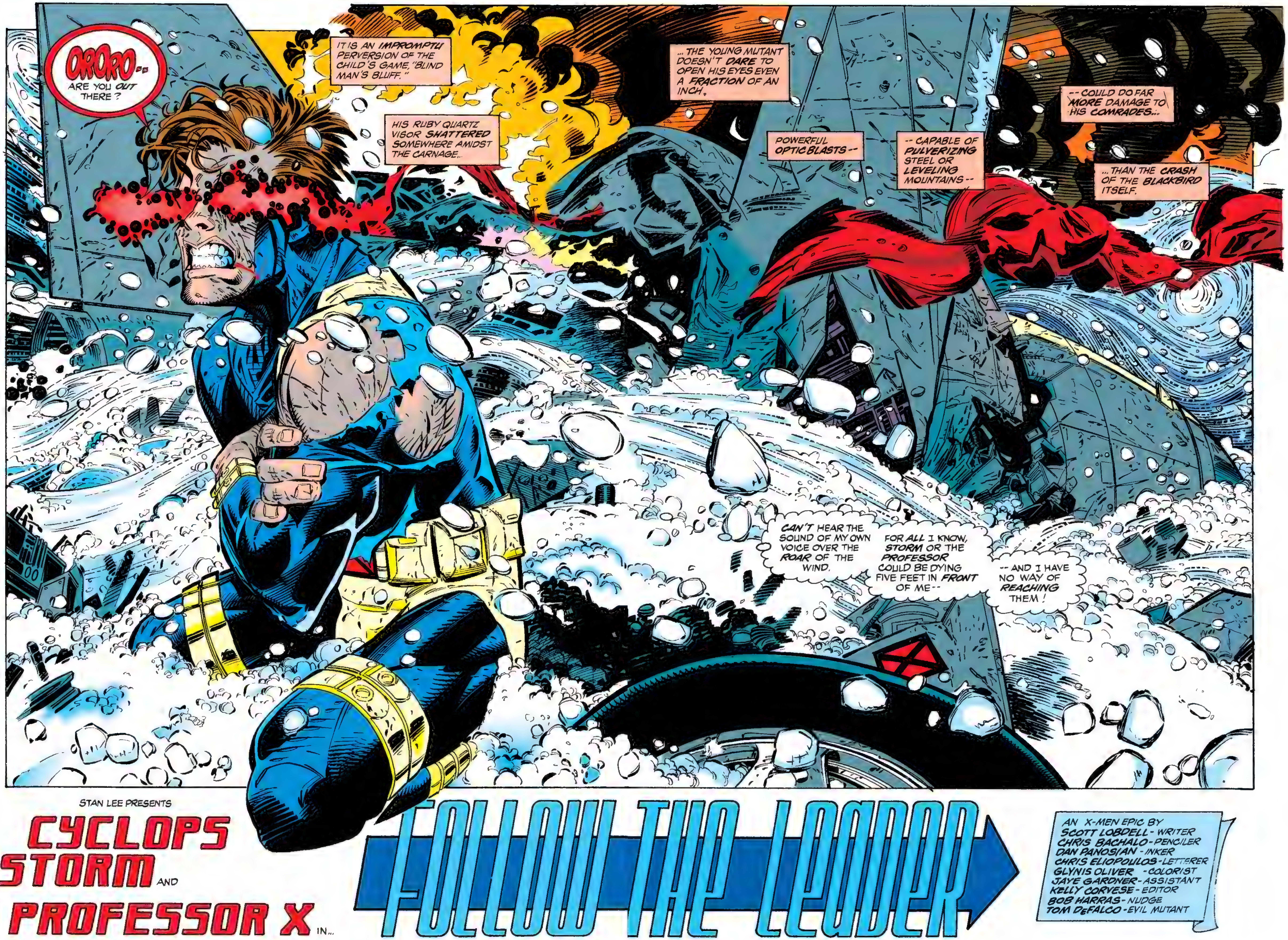

Overlay:Complete
Acch, CHARLES-- HAVE YE EVER SEEN SUCH A VILE SIGHT? THE WORST PART IS, AS NEAR AS WE CAN TELL, THE ANOMALY HAS EFFECTED EACH VICTIM'S GENES DIFFERENTLY.
AS IF THIS WEE INTRUDER IS MUTATING ITSELF WITH EACH NEW VICTIM.
NO MATTER HOW REPULSIVE THE THOUGHT, MOIRA--
--I'M AFRAID THAT YOU AND I MUST ACCEPT THE REALITY THAT SOMETHING... OR SOMEONE... HAS RELEASED A VIRUS UPON THE UNSUSPECTING MUTANT POPULACE.
WHILE I WAS IN GENOSHA, TENDING TO THE HANDFUL OF SICK AND DYING...*
...I WAS HOPING AGAINST HOPE THAT IT WAS STRICTLY A MUTATE PROBLEM CAUSED BY THEIR ACCELERATED BIOLOGIES.
* X-FACTOR #90 --B.H.
SIMILARLY, THE INFORMATION I HAVE BEEN GATHERING OVER THE LAST SEVERAL WEEKS* HAS PROVED INCONCLUSIVE UNTIL THIS MOMENT.
WE CAN NO LONGER IGNORE THE OBVIOUS.
* SINCE #298 --B.H.
I CANNAE BELIEVE THE FATES CAN BE THIS CRUEL.
IS PAIN AND SUFFERING--
DEATH AND DYING-- ALWAYS GOING TO BE THE LEGACY OF BEING BORN A MUTANT.
LEGACY.


MOIRA MacTAGGERT'S QUESTION PROVOKES AN UNEXPECTED RESPONSE IN CHARLES XAVIER'S MIND.
IN AN INSTANT, HE REALIZES WHERE THAT WORD WAS USED WITH SUCH REGULARITY, HE THOUGHT IT WAS A CODE, AND FEARED IT WAS A WARNING...
Child of innocence, demon of hate. Smiling girl in a field, frenzied teen in a war zone. A flower in her fingers, a sword in her hand.
Little girl, mutant sorceress. What a combination. A creature who has seen more of time from both sides of the unending path than I ever could hope to. She has lived then and now, here and there. Earth present, past and future. Limbo never-where, forevernow. What would her future bring? What would the onset of puberty trigger? Would little Illyana become a teleporting mutant in the care of the children of the atom, or a demoness apprentice in a nether-region even the denizens of Hell fear to mention? In time, one would find out. But time is something not everyone has much of. No matter the age, no matter the desire. My legacy may strike anyone born of mutant blood. From the oldest of the old...to the youngest of the young...
...IN THE FILES OF THE MYSTERIOUS TIMELUST VILLAIN CALLED STRYFE, A WORD THAT MERELY PRICKED AT XAVIER'S MIND SUDDENLY FLARES LIKE A DANGER SIGNAL...
...AND HIS HEART GROWS COLD.
DEAR GOD, PLEASE... NO...
MOIRA --I REALIZE IT'S DIFFICULT FOR YOU TO TALK ABOUT, BUT YOU ARE THE ONLY PERSON WITH HANDS-ON EXPERIENCE IN TREATING THIS... DISEASE.
WHAT CAN YOU TELL ME ABOUT ITS TREATMENT?
PRECIOUS LITTLE, I'M AFRAID...


"... IN EVERY ONE OF THE CASES I'VE BEEN *INVOLVED* IN--
"--THE RESULTS ARE ALL *EXACTLY* THE *SAME.*
"WHAT I'M TRYING TO TELL YE, IS THERE *IS NO TREATMENT.*
"*ONCE* CONTRACTED--
"--THIS VIRUS IS *TERMINAL.*"
CLICK

MARVEL COMICS
1
JUN
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
X-MEN
UNLIMITED
TM
1st ISSUE COLLECTORS ITEM!
SURVIVAL
30 YEARS
X-MEN
1963-1993
and DAN PANOSIAN
1.9.9.3


THE DISLOCATED SHOULDER IS MERCIFULLY NUMB.
THREE FRACTURED RIBS REMIND HIM HE'S ALIVE.
INTERNAL BLEEDING NOTWITHSTANDING, IT SHOULD BE SEVERAL HOURS BEFORE HIS COLLAPSED RIGHT LUNG BECOMES LIFE-THREATENING.
IN ALL LIKELIHOOD, HOWEVER, CYCLOPS-- THE FIRST X-MAN...
...WILL BE DEAD LONG BEFORE THAT.
PROFESSOR?!


ORORO-- ARE YOU OUT THERE?
IT IS AN IMPROMPTU PERVERSION OF THE CHILD'S GAME, "BLIND MAN'S BLUFF."
HIS RUBY QUARTZ VISOR SHATTERED SOMEWHERE AMIDST THE CARNAGE...
... THE YOUNG MUTANT DOESN'T DARE TO OPEN HIS EYES EVEN A FRACTION OF AN INCH.
POWERFUL OPTIC BLASTS--
--CAPABLE OF PULVERIZING STEEL OR LEVELING MOUNTAINS--
--COULD DO FAR MORE DAMAGE TO HIS COMRADES...
...THAN THE CRASH OF THE BLACKBIRD ITSELF.
CAN'T HEAR THE SOUND OF MY OWN VOICE OVER THE ROAR OF THE WIND.
FOR ALL I KNOW, STORM OR THE PROFESSOR COULD BE DYING FIVE FEET IN FRONT OF ME--
--AND I HAVE NO WAY OF REACHING THEM!

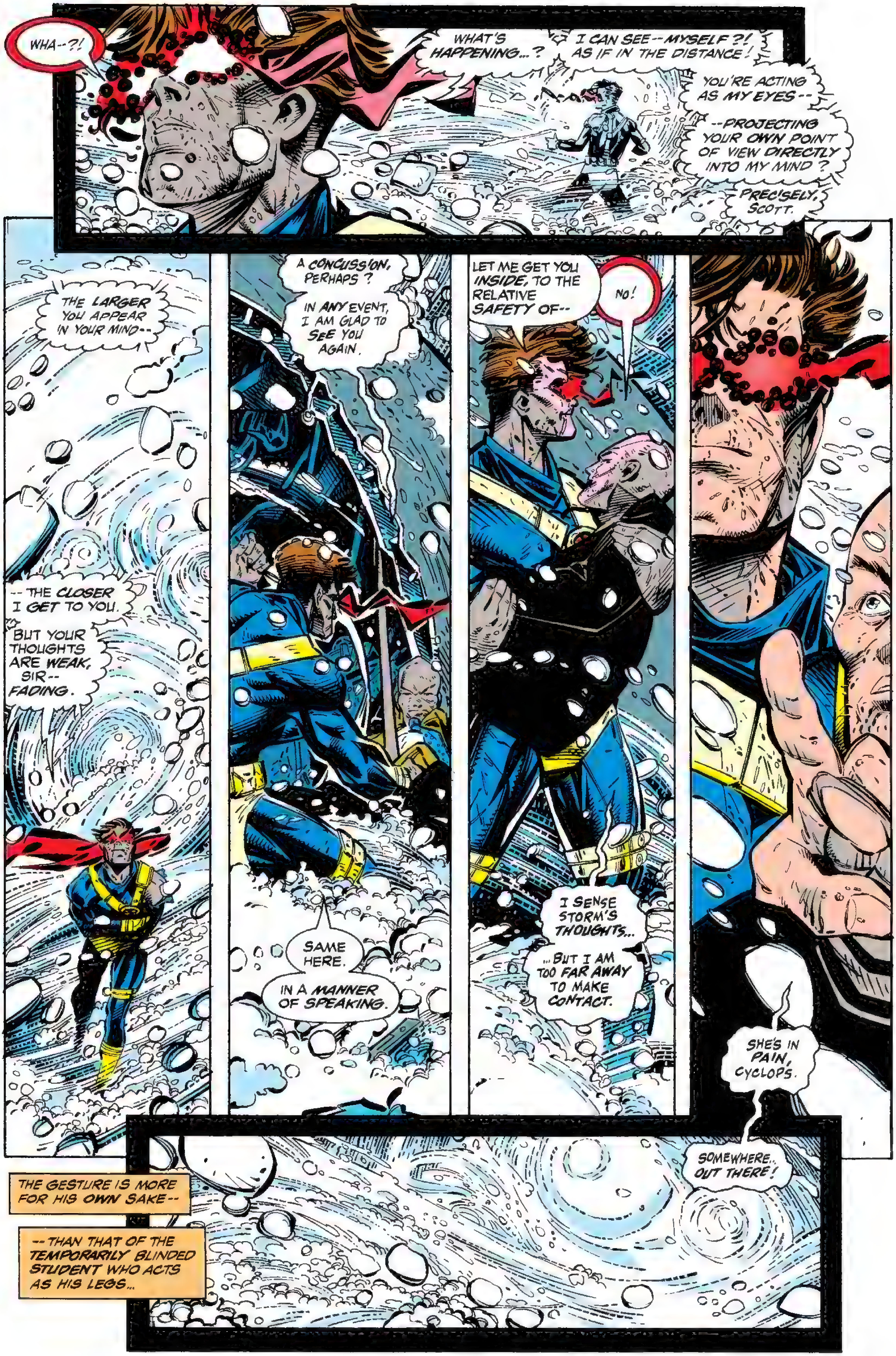
STAN LEE PRESENTS

CYCLOPS
STORM AND
PROFESSOR X IN...

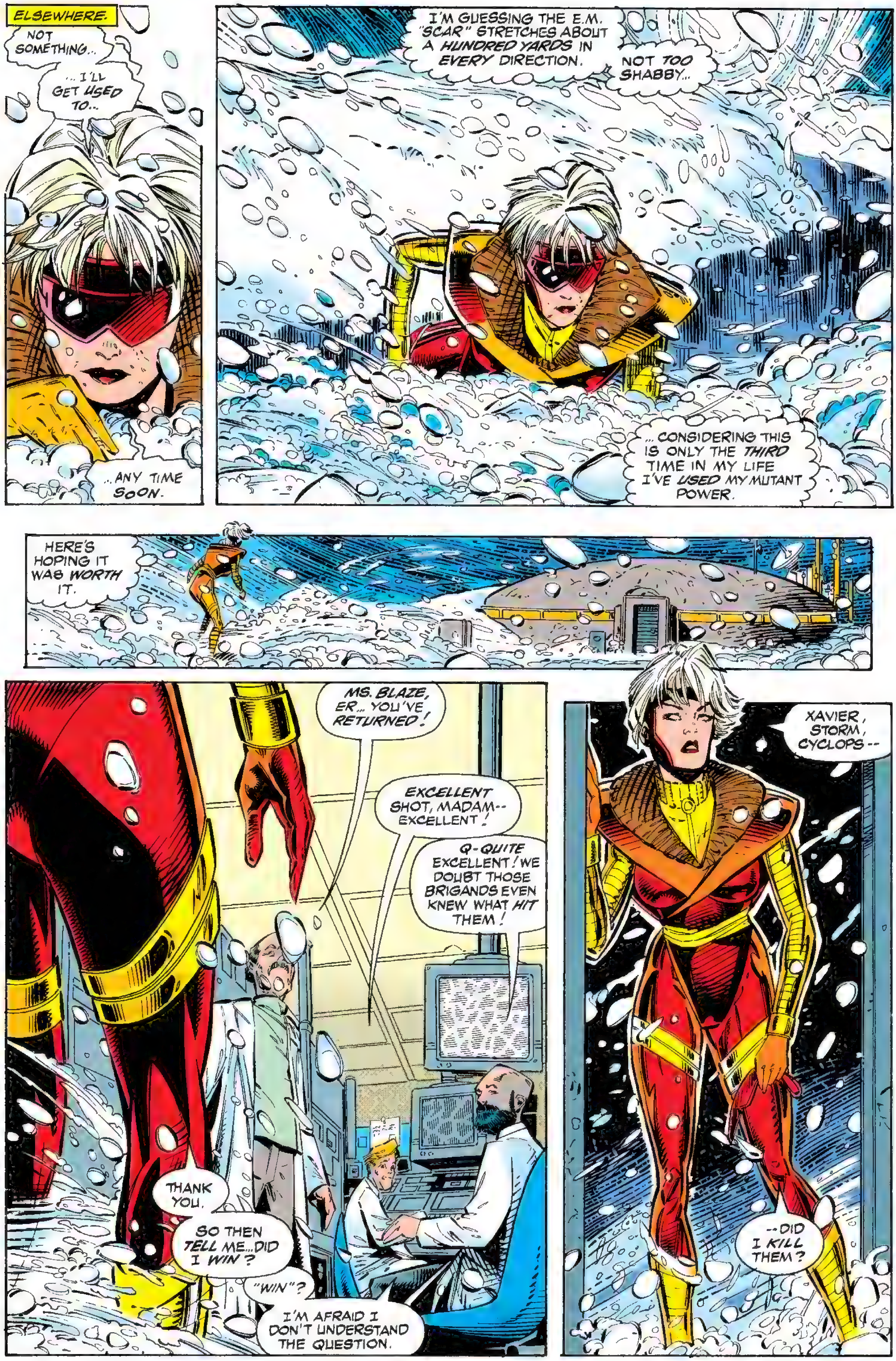
FOLLOW THE LEADER

AN X-MEN EPIC BY
SCOTT LOBDELL - WRITER
CHRIS BACHALO - PENCILER
DAN PANOSIAN - INKER
CHRIS ELIOPOULOS - LETTERER
GLYNIS OLIVER - COLORIST
JAYE GARDNER - ASSISTANT
KELLY CORVESE - EDITOR
BOB HARRAS - NUDGE
TOM DeFALCO - EVIL MUTANT

KEEP IT *TOGETHER*, SCOTT.
IF THE PROFESSOR WERE AROUND TO PICK UP MY FEELINGS OF *HOPELESSNESS*, HE'D...
...HE'D...
THAT'S IT!
PROFESSOR XAVIER IS THE MOST *POWERFUL* TELEPATH IN THE *WORLD*.
IF I CONCENTRATE *HARD* ENOUGH...
THOUGH NOT POSSESSED OF HIS MENTOR'S *MENTAL* POWERS--
--WHAT CYCLOPS *LACKS* IN TECHNIQUE...
...HE MORE THAN COMPENSATES WITH PURE DESPERATION.
PROFESSOR?!
THE RAW, *UNFOCUSED* THOUGHTS STRIKE AT CHARLES XAVIER'S MIND LIKE A *BOLT* FROM ON *HIGH*.
SCOTT--?!
IN SOMETHING *SHORT* OF AN *INSTANT*, THE LEADER OF THE BAND OF MUTANTS KNOWN AS X-MEN ASSESSES THE SITUATION.
THE AMBUSH...
...THE IMPACT...
...A MIRACLE WE SURVIVED AT ALL.
TOO *WEAK* TO SHOUT FOR HELP...
EXCUSE THE INTRUSION, SCOTT.
PROFESSOR, YOU'RE *ALIVE*.
FOR THE MOMENT.

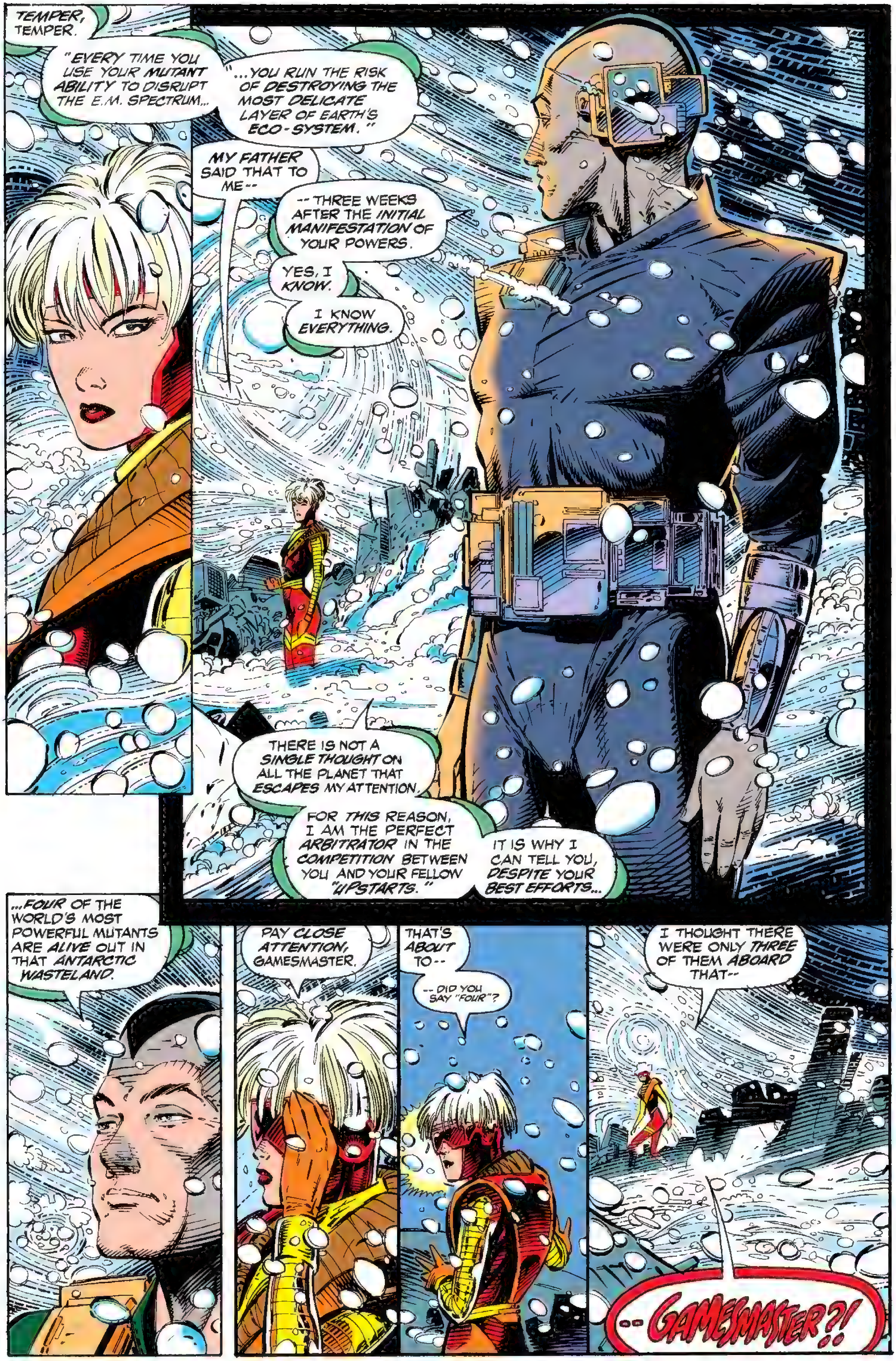

WHA--?!
WHAT'S HAPPENING...?
I CAN SEE--MYSELF?! AS IF IN THE DISTANCE!
YOU'RE ACTING AS MY EYES--
--PROJECTING YOUR OWN POINT OF VIEW DIRECTLY INTO MY MIND?
PRECISELY, SCOTT.
THE LARGER YOU APPEAR IN YOUR MIND--
--THE CLOSER I GET TO YOU.
BUT YOUR THOUGHTS ARE WEAK, SIR--FADING.
A CONCUSSION, PERHAPS?
IN ANY EVENT, I AM GLAD TO SEE YOU AGAIN.
SAME HERE.
IN A MANNER OF SPEAKING.
LET ME GET YOU INSIDE, TO THE RELATIVE SAFETY OF--
NO!
I SENSE STORM'S THOUGHTS...
...BUT I AM TOO FAR AWAY TO MAKE CONTACT.
SHE'S IN PAIN, CYCLOPS.
SOMEWHERE.. OUT THERE!
THE GESTURE IS MORE FOR HIS OWN SAKE--
--THAN THAT OF THE TEMPORARILY BLINDED STUDENT WHO ACTS AS HIS LEGS...

...AS THE TWO MEN BEGIN A SEARCH FOR THEIR FALLEN COMRADE.
UNAWARE SHE IS LESS WOUNDED BY THE CRASH ITSELF--
STORM?!
ORORO?
--THAN BY WHAT SHE HAS LEARNED IN ITS AFTERMATH.
I CAN "SEE" HER THROUGH YOUR EYES, PROFESSOR.
SHE'S ALIVE...
...BUT IN SOME STATE OF SHOCK, IT WOULD SEEM.
STORM, WHAT IS IT?
WHATEVER CAUSED THAT BLAST--
--TORE AND SHRED AT THE VERY WOMB OF MOTHER EARTH.
YOU'RE SAYING...?
I AM SAYING I SHARE A BOND WITH THE EARTH.
I FEEL HER PAIN... AS IF IT IS MY OWN.


ELSEWHERE.
NOT SOMETHING...
...I'LL GET USED TO...
...ANY TIME SOON.
I'M GUESSING THE E.M. "SCAR" STRETCHES ABOUT A HUNDRED YARDS IN EVERY DIRECTION.
NOT TOO SHABBY...
...CONSIDERING THIS IS ONLY THE THIRD TIME IN MY LIFE I'VE USED MY MUTANT POWER.
HERE'S HOPING IT WAS WORTH IT.
MS. BLAZE, ER... YOU'VE RETURNED!
EXCELLENT SHOT, MADAM-- EXCELLENT!
Q-QUITE EXCELLENT! WE DOUBT THOSE BRIGANDS EVEN KNEW WHAT HIT THEM!
THANK YOU.
SO THEN TELL ME...DID I WIN?
"WIN"?
I'M AFRAID I DON'T UNDERSTAND THE QUESTION.
XAVIER, STORM, CYCLOPS--
--DID I KILL THEM?

THE, UM... TRUTH, MADAM?
WE DON'T KNOW.
THE ELECTRO-MAGNETIC NATURE OF YOUR BLAST HAS PRODUCED AN UNEXPECTED EFFECT ON OUR SENSORS.
BY OUR ESTIMATE, IT MAY TAKE WEEKS BEFORE THE E.M. BAND RETURNS TO NORMAL.
UNTIL THEN, WE HAVE NO WAY OF TELLING IF YOUR QUARRY IS ALIVE OR DEAD.
YOU COULD ASK ME.
GASP WHO ARE YOU?!
HOW DID YOU GET IN HERE?
THERE ARE VERY FEW PLACES--
--OFF-LIMITS TO THE GAMESMASTER!
TO ANSWER YOUR ORIGINAL QUESTION, SIENA...
NO.
YOU DID NOT "WIN."
THE LEADERS OF THE X-MEN STILL LIVE.
HMMMP
I'M SURE I SPEAK ON BEHALF OF EVERYONE HERE WHEN I SAY...
...I'M SORRY TO HEAR THAT.
SURELY, YOU DO NOT HOLD US RESPONSIBLE?!
ON THE CONTRARY--

--BLAMING OTHERS FOR HER OWN SHORTCOMINGS...
...IS PROBABLY SIENA BLAZE'S BIGGEST CHARACTER FLAW.
FWSHH-WOOAM!
COMING IN A CLOSE SECOND, IS HER TOTAL DISREGARD FOR ALL HUMAN LIFE--
--INCLUDING, EVIDENTLY... HER OWN!


TEMPER, TEMPER.
"EVERY TIME YOU USE YOUR MUTANT ABILITY TO DISRUPT THE E.M. SPECTRUM...
...YOU RUN THE RISK OF DESTROYING THE MOST DELICATE LAYER OF EARTH'S ECO-SYSTEM."
MY FATHER SAID THAT TO ME--
--THREE WEEKS AFTER THE INITIAL MANIFESTATION OF YOUR POWERS.
YES, I KNOW.
I KNOW EVERYTHING.
THERE IS NOT A SINGLE THOUGHT ON ALL THE PLANET THAT ESCAPES MY ATTENTION.
FOR THIS REASON, I AM THE PERFECT ARBITRATOR IN THE COMPETITION BETWEEN YOU AND YOUR FELLOW "UPSTARTS."
IT IS WHY I CAN TELL YOU, DESPITE YOUR BEST EFFORTS...
...FOUR OF THE WORLD'S MOST POWERFUL MUTANTS ARE ALIVE OUT IN THAT ANTARCTIC WASTELAND.
PAY CLOSE ATTENTION, GAMESMASTER.
THAT'S ABOUT TO--
--DID YOU SAY "FOUR"?
I THOUGHT THERE WERE ONLY THREE OF THEM ABOARD THAT--
--GAMESMASTER?!

WESTCHESTER COUNTY, NEW YORK.
SPECIFICALLY, XAVIER'S SCHOOL FOR GIFTED YOUNGSTERS.
PSYLOCKE-- WHAT DO YOU MEAN, "I CAN'T FIND THEM"?!
MY APOLOGIES, BISHOP. I THOUGHT YOU WOULD APPRECIATE A DIRECT ANSWER.
WE LOST RADIO CONTACT WITH SCOTT AND THE OTHERS TWENTY-SIX MINUTES AGO--
--THE EXACT MOMENT OUR ELECTRO-GRAVIMETRIC SENSORS INDICATED A RUPTURE IN THE EARTH'S E.M. FIELD DIRECTLY ALONG THEIR FLIGHT ROUTE.
BEFORE CEREBRO'S CIRCUIT-BREAKERS AUTOMATICALLY ENGAGED, IT IDENTIFIED THE SOURCE OF THE DISTURBANCE AS BIOGENETIC.
AN "EVIL" MUTANT, THEN?
SO IT WOULD APPEAR, ALTHOUGH "EVIL" IS A SUBJECTIVE TERM.
YOU'RE SAYING THEY WERE AMBUSHED?
IF THEY SOMEHOW SURVIVED THE BLAST, THEY WERE DOWNED IN THE MIDDLE OF THE ANTARCTIC--
--NO DOUBT WOUNDED, WITH LITTLE OR NO SHELTER.
NO. I WOULD NOT USE THE WORD "AMBUSHED"...

"... I WOULD SAY THEY WERE SLAUGHTERED."
I WISH I COULD BE OF HELP, PROFESSOR--
--BUT YOUR FIRST PRIORITY IS REINING IN YOUR OPTIC BEAMS, SCOTT.
AS THE ONE MOST FAMILIAR WITH THE SHI'AR TECHNOLOGY ON WHICH OUR COMM-BOARD IS BASED--
-- I'M WILLING TO CONCEDE THAT ANY ATTEMPT AT A REPAIR...
... IS FUTILE.
FWZZZAT
PROFESSOR?!
I AM UNHARMED, SON.
ORORO?
I WILL EXTINGUISH THE FLAMES, CHARLES--
--GRATEFUL MY WEATHER-WIELDING POWERS ARE OF SOME USE.
SIR, SINCE WE MAY BE HERE A WHILE..
... PERHAPS AN EXAMINATION OF THE EVENTS LEADING UP TO THIS SITUATION WILL HELP?
SPOKEN LIKE THE MASTER STRATEGIST YOU ARE, SCOTT.

IF YOU WILL BOTH OPEN YOUR MINDS...
...WE CAN CREATE A PSI-COMPOSITE-- STARTING WITH THIS AFTERNOON'S FESTIVITIES IN THE SAVAGE LAND.
--FATHER'S EYES.
WHAT ABOUT YOU, SCOTT? WHEN ARE YOU GOING TO MAKE JEAN AN HONEST WOMAN AND START RAISING LITTLE MUTANTS OF YOUR OWN?
JEAN IS AN HONEST WOMAN, KA-ZAR. HAVE YOU EVER HEARD HER LIE?
ON BEHALF OF THE X-MEN, SHANNA-- WE'D LIKE TO THANK YOU AGAIN FOR THE VIBRANIUM NEEDED TO FUEL OUR SHIP'S CLOAKING DEVICE.
AFTER ALL YOU'VE DONE FOR US OVER THE--
IT IS EVIDENT OUR DEPARTURE WAS WITHOUT INCIDENT.
A PRE-LIFTOFF CHECK INDICATED THE BLACKBIRD WAS FUNCTIONING WELL WITHIN SAFETY PARAMETERS.
YOU CONTACTED PSYLOCKE TO CONFIRM OUR ARRIVAL TIME--
--AND CONFIRMED OUR FLIGHT PLAN WOULD LEAD US OUT OF THE HIDDEN LAND.
WE HAD REACHED MACH 4, ONE-HUNDRED AND FIFTY MILES DUE NORTH...

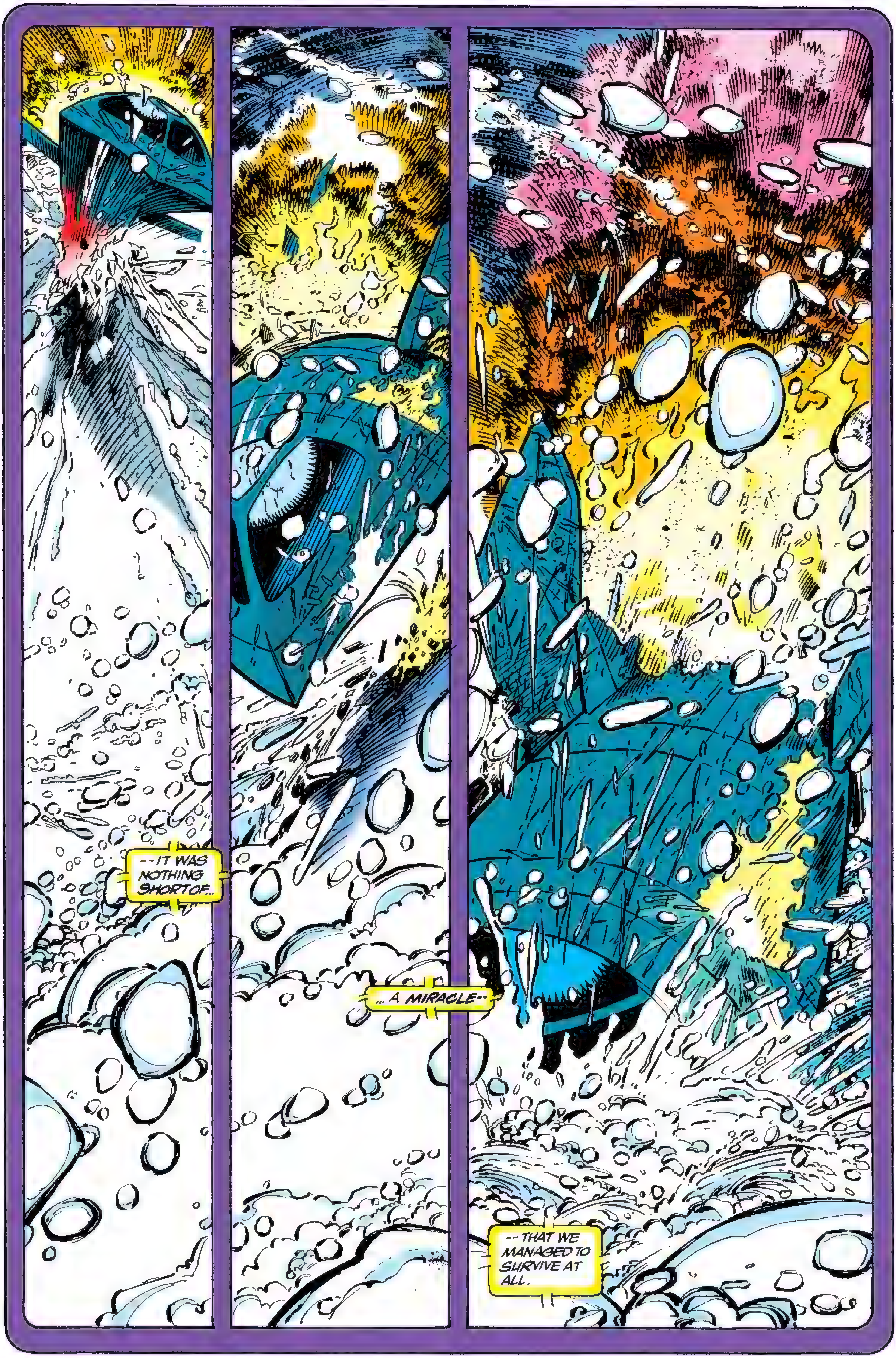
...WHEN...
IT IS TO HIS CREDIT THAT XAVIER EVEN MANAGES TO MAINTAIN THIS PORTRAIT OF DISASTER--
--CULLED FROM THE MINDS OF EACH OF THE THREE INDIVIDUALS WHO LIVED IT.
TO THEIR UNSPOKEN HORROR, THEY REALIZE THEIR INITIAL SEPARATE IMPRESSIONS WERE WRONG.
IT WAS NOT A MALFUNCTION WHICH CAUSED THE EXPLOSION--
--NOR WAS IT THE RESULT OF SOME NATURAL PHENOMENON, A "WHITE TWISTER" UNIQUE TO THE FROZEN WASTELANDS.
THE ENERGY SIGNATURE IS UNMISTAKABLY BIOGENETIC...
...SIMILIAR IN EFFECT IF NOT IN ORIGIN...
...TO THE POWER OF THE PHOENIX.

NAV-SYSTEM, GONE!
PROPULSION, GONE!
COMM--GONE!
ORORO--GET THE PROFESSOR OUT OF HERE... NOW!
WHILE I APPRECIATE THE SENTIMENT, SON--
WE'RE GOING DOWN, PEOPLE--
--AND THERE'S NOTHING I CAN DO TO PREVENT IT!
-- I'M NOT YOUR FIRST PRIORITY.
THIS IS NO TIME TO PLAY HERO!
SCOTT, EVEN IF WE SURVIVED THE IMPACT--
--WE'D BE DEAD FROM EXPOSURE WITHIN MOMENTS...
...IF WE LOSE THE SHELTER OF THE SHIP!
BY THE BRIGHT LADY--
--I WILL NOT LET THAT HAPPEN!
AS WE ARE SHARING OUR THOUGHTS, IT IS IMPOSSIBLE FOR ME TO HIDE THE TRUTH--
--THAT DESPITE MY RESPECT FOR ORORO'S RESOURCES...
...I DOUBTED EVEN SHE WAS UP TO THE TASK.

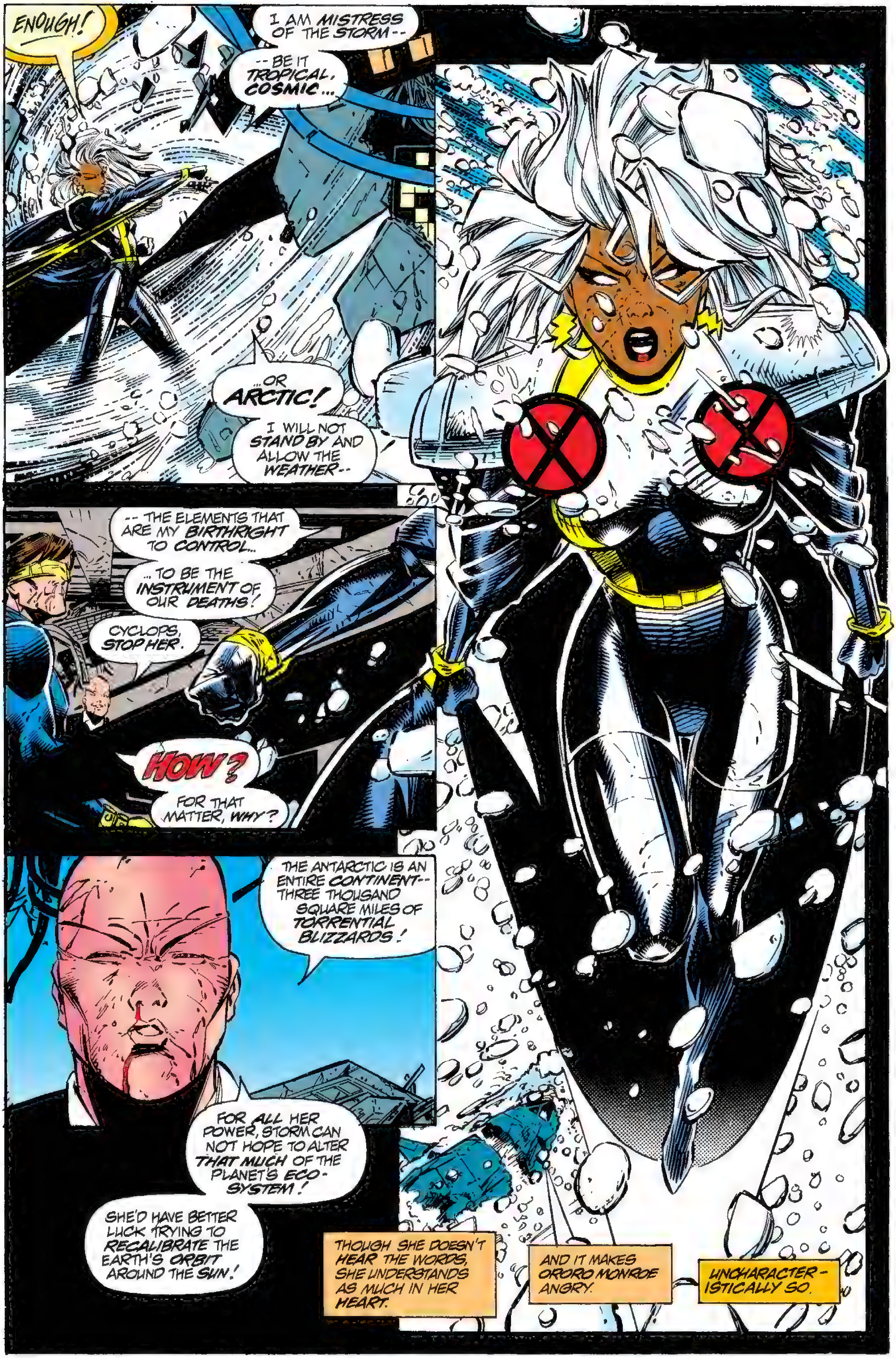
LET US SLOW THE ACTION A MOMENT.
FOCUS ON THE DETAILS YOU MIGHT NOT HAVE NOTICED IN THE INSTANT YOU LEFT THE SHIP, STORM.
MY FIRST IMPRESSION WAS THAT THE NATURAL WEATHER PATTERNS...
...WERE SOMEHOW... ASKEW?
THOUGH I DID NOT RECALL IT ORIGINALLY--
--IT IS CLEAR NOW... I SAW THE POINT OF ORIGIN OF THE ASSAULT.
BETWEEN THE BLACKBIRD'S RAPID DESCENT--
--AND THE MORE IMMEDIATE DANGER OF THE FLAMES IGNITING THE FUEL TANKS...
...I AM AFRAID MY CONCENTRATION WAS SOLELY ON THE TASK AT HAND.
NO NEED FOR RECRIMINATIONS, ORORO.
USING YOUR WIND-WIELDING ABILITY TO LAND 300 TONS OF FLAMING STEEL--
--WAS CERTAINLY DESERVING OF THE BULK OF YOUR ATTENTION.

SCOTT--
--THE PSIONIC INTERFERENCE IS SEVERE!
IT'S CLEAR, HOWEVER--
-- SHE CANNOT MANUEVER...
...A SHIP THIS SIZE!
THEN WE'LL HAVE TO SEE...
...ABOUT MAKING IT THAT MUCH SMALLER!
STRAP IN AND...
...GRAB HOLD OF MY ARM
SIR!
READY! BUT WHAT ARE...
...YOU PLANNING, SON?
CLK
I'D RATHER NOT SAY--
--YOU'RE SURE TO TALK ME OUT OF IT!
ONLY ONE SHOT TO PULL THIS OFF!
COMPENSATE FOR WIND IN EXCESS OF 50 KNOTS!
IGNORE THE VISOR--
--WON'T MATTER IF... WE DON'T--
--SURVIVE!
ON THREE, SLIM!
ONE!
TWO!

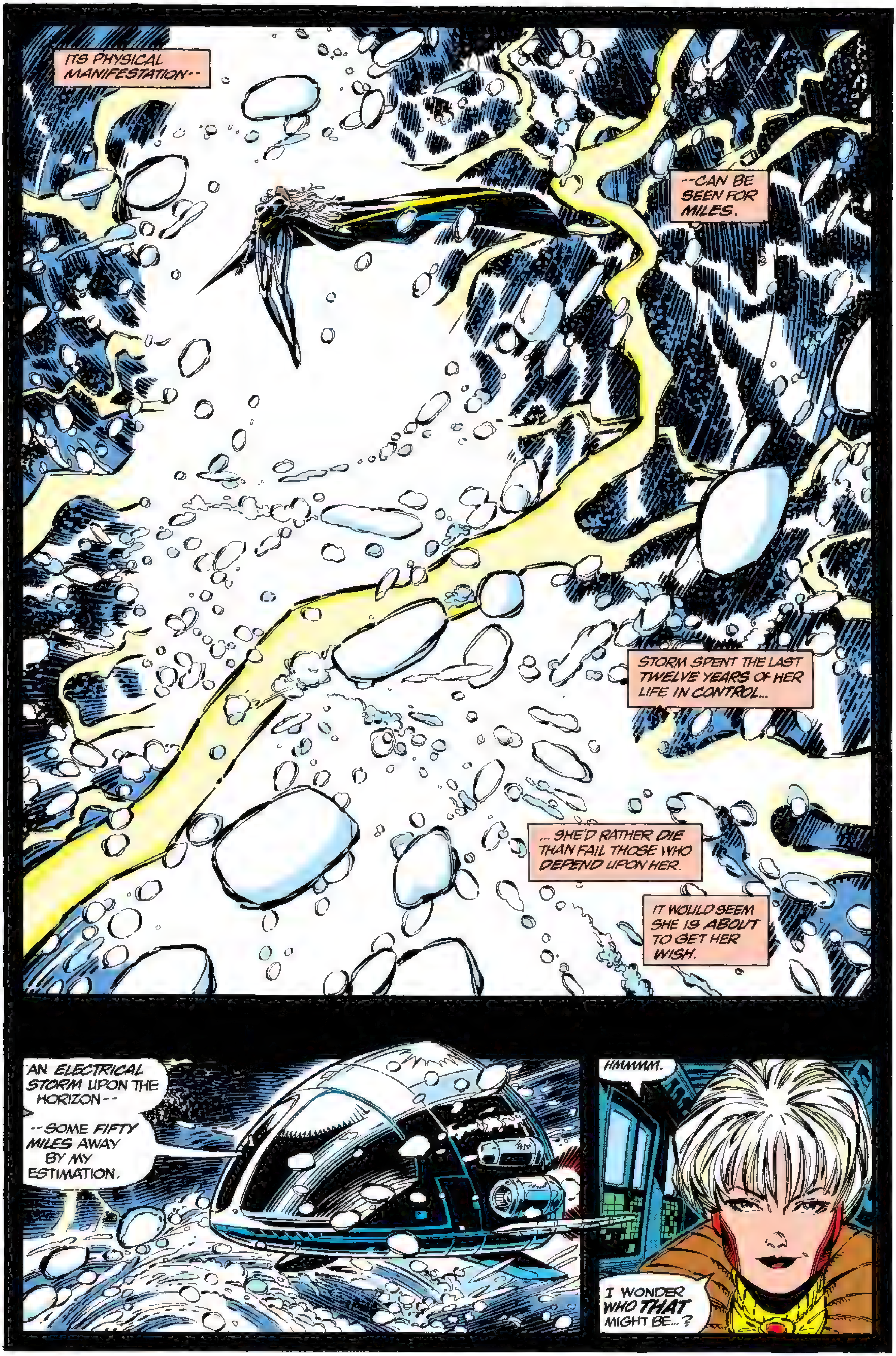
IN RETROSPECT, SCOTT, YOU WERE RIGHT.
BY THE GODDESS!
ZAKT!
I WOULD HAVE TRIED TO PREVENT YOU...
...FROM SHEARING OFF THE REAR OF THE AIRCRAFT!
ONLY THE MOST RECENT EXAMPLE OF WHY THE TWO OF YOU ARE TEAM LEADERS.
FOR STORM IMMEDIATELY REALIZED YOUR INTENT.
YOU SOUGHT TO MAKE HER JOB EASIER BY REDUCING THE AMOUNT OF THE BLACKBIRD SHE NEEDED TO LAND.
AS IT WAS, BETWEEN THE WIND--
--AND THE RATE OF DESCENT--
--COMBINED WITH THE DAMAGE THE INITIAL BLAST CAUSED TO THE ELEMENTAL--
--PSIONIC--
--AND ELECTROMAGNETIC SPECTRUMS...
...I THINK WE CAN ALL AGREE--

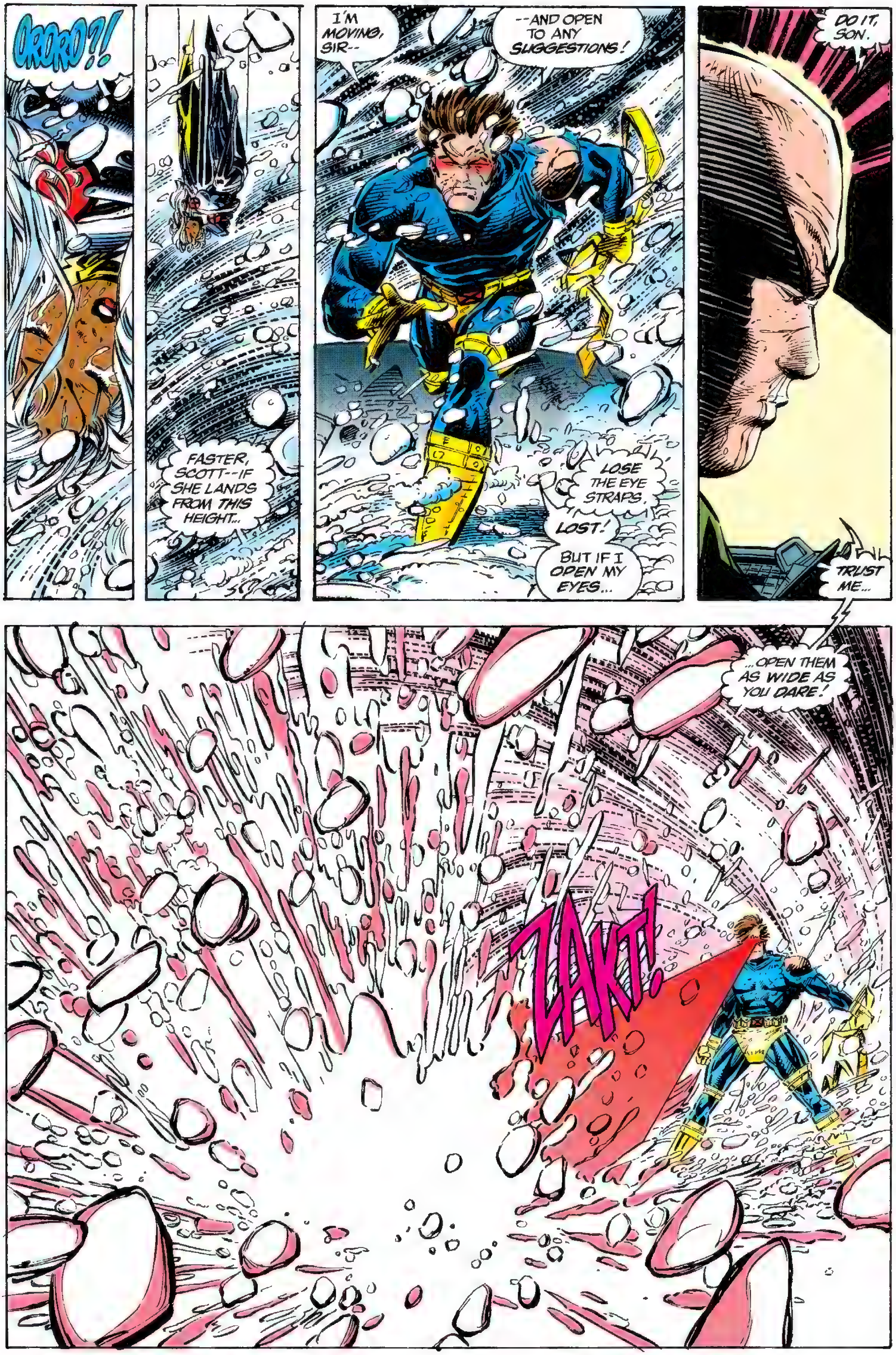

--IT WAS NOTHING SHORT OF...
...A MIRACLE--
--THAT WE MANAGED TO SURVIVE AT ALL.

WHAT IS THE *OLD* SAYING...?
"ANY LANDING YOU CAN WALK AWAY FROM--"
"--IS A GOOD ONE."
WHOEVER *SAID* THAT, PROBABLY DIDN'T GET TO PSIONICALLY *RELIVE* THE EXPERIENCE AFTER THE FACT.
NO. PROBABLY NOT.
TO CONFIRM THE *OBVIOUS*, UNTIL THE AFTER-EFFECTS OF THE BLAST *SUBSIDE*...
...IT WON'T BE POSSIBLY FOR ME TO *MENTALLY CONTACT* THE OTHERS OVER SUCH A *GREAT DISTANCE*.
IF ONLY I COULD *SEE* THE EXTENT OF THE DAMAGE, I--
--WOULD BE AS *FRUSTRATED* AS THE REST OF US, SCOTT.
IT SEEMS THE *BEST USE*
SKKREESHK!
STORM-- THAT SOUND...?!
A SECTION OF THE *WING*-- LANDING JUST THIS MOMENT!


ENOUGH!
I AM MISTRESS OF THE STORM--
--BE IT TROPICAL, COSMIC...
...OR ARCTIC!
I WILL NOT STAND BY AND ALLOW THE WEATHER--
--THE ELEMENTS THAT ARE MY BIRTHRIGHT TO CONTROL...
...TO BE THE INSTRUMENT OF OUR DEATHS!
CYCLOPS, STOP HER.
HOW?
FOR THAT MATTER, WHY?
THE ANTARCTIC IS AN ENTIRE CONTINENT-- THREE THOUSAND SQUARE MILES OF TORRENTIAL BLIZZARDS!
FOR ALL HER POWER, STORM CAN NOT HOPE TO ALTER THAT MUCH OF THE PLANET'S ECO-SYSTEM!
SHE'D HAVE BETTER LUCK TRYING TO RECALIBRATE THE EARTH'S ORBIT AROUND THE SUN!
THOUGH SHE DOESN'T HEAR THE WORDS, SHE UNDERSTANDS AS MUCH IN HER HEART.
AND IT MAKES ORORO MONROE ANGRY.
UNCHARACTER-ISTICALLY SO.

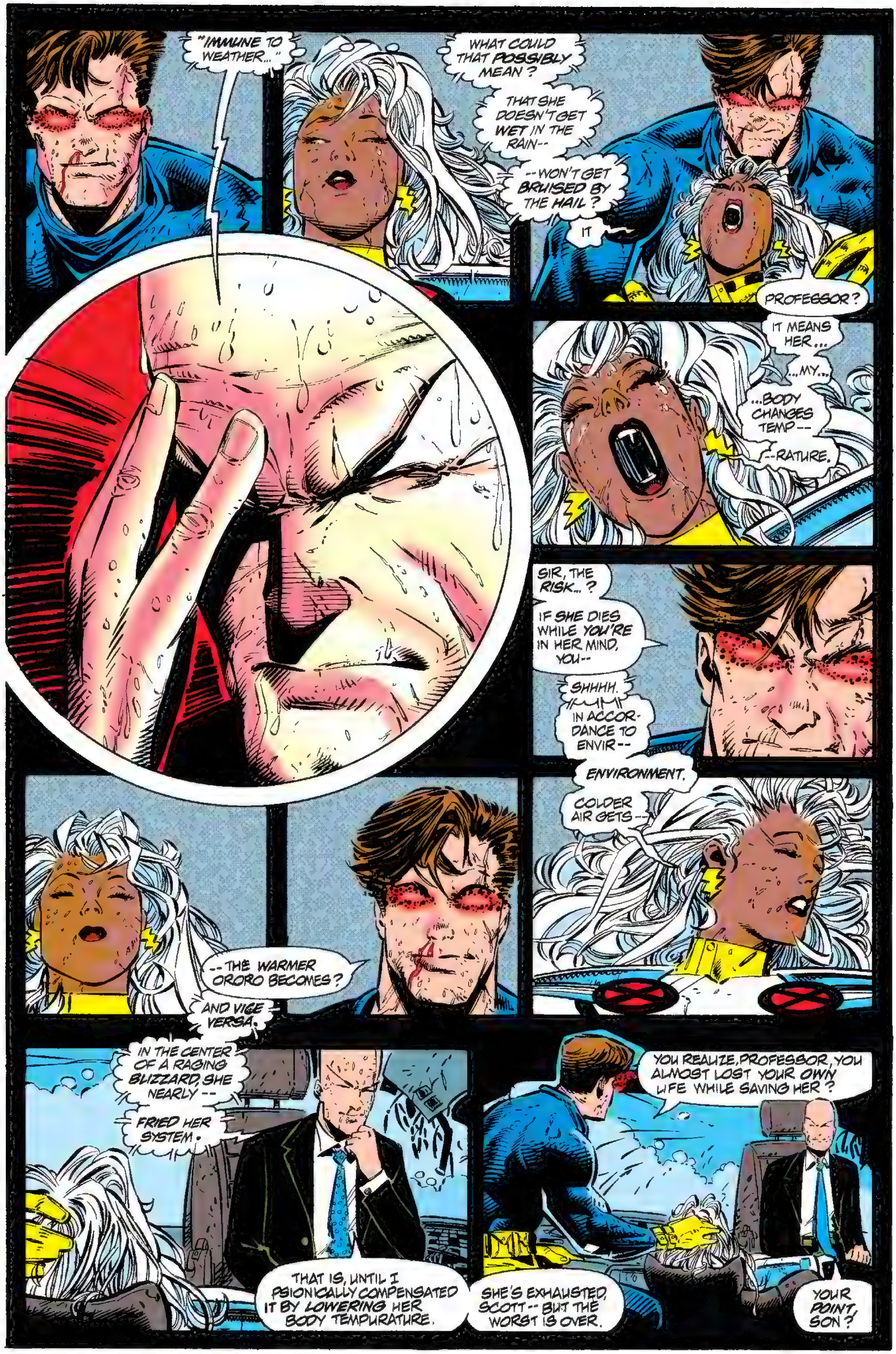
AFTER HER PARENTS DIED WHEN SHE WAS EIGHT YEARS OLD--
--SHE HAD COME TO SEE THE WORLD AS A DARK PLACE.
A GRAY WORLD WHERE THINGS HAPPENED WITH NEITHER RHYME NOR REASON.
WHEN HER MUTANT ABILITY DEVELOPED SEVERAL YEARS LATER, SHE GAINED A "SECOND SIGHT"...
...A BROADER PERSPECTIVE...
...ONE CAPABLE OF SEEING THE WEATHER PATTERNS THAT ENVELOP THE PLANET AS A SERIES OF DIFFERENT COLORS DANCING ACROSS A PALETTE--
--AND SHE WAS THE ARTIST.
IN THIS MOMENT, IT'S AS IF SOMEONE HAS SCARRED THE CANVAS.
WHERE THERE ONCE WAS BEAUTY, THERE IS ONLY CHAOS...
...A WORLD SHE CAN'T HOPE TO CONTROL.
QUICKLY, CYCLOPS... OUTSIDE!
B--
NOW!
HER SCREAM IS SILENT.
INTERNAL.


ITS PHYSICAL MANIFESTATION--
--CAN BE SEEN FOR MILES.
STORM SPENT THE LAST TWELVE YEARS OF HER LIFE IN CONTROL...
...SHE'D RATHER DIE THAN FAIL THOSE WHO DEPEND UPON HER.
IT WOULD SEEM SHE IS ABOUT TO GET HER WISH.
AN ELECTRICAL STORM UPON THE HORIZON--
--SOME FIFTY MILES AWAY BY MY ESTIMATION.
HMMMM.
I WONDER WHO THAT MIGHT BE...?


ORORO?!
FASTER, SCOTT--IF SHE LANDS FROM THIS HEIGHT...
I'M MOVING, SIR--
--AND OPEN TO ANY SUGGESTIONS!
LOSE THE EYE STRAPS.
LOST!
BUT IF I OPEN MY EYES...
DO IT, SON.
TRUST ME...
...OPEN THEM AS WIDE AS YOU DARE!
ZAKT!

FWOMP!
OF COURSE!
THE PULVERIZED SNOW CUSHIONED HER FALL!
BUT DID SHE SURVIVE?!
I DO NOT SENSE ANYTHING--
--BUT THAT DOESN'T MEAN SHE'S NOT STILL ALIVE!
I'LL HAVE HER INSIDE IN...
WHA--?!
HER SKIN IS HOT!
IT'S ALL I CAN DO TO HOLD HER.
FOLLOW MY PSIONIC DIRECTIONS BACK...
...I WILL EXPLAIN EN ROUTE.

PROFESSOR, SHE'S--
--BURNING UP... YES, I KNOW.
PLACE HER ON THE CHAIR BESIDE ME!
WITH ALL DUE RESPECT, WHAT CAN YOU DO FOR HER?
BIO-RHYTHM.
I CAN ENTER HER MIND AND PSIONICALLY LOWER HER BODY TEMPERATURE.
BUT IN YOUR WEAKENED STATE, WON'T THAT AFFECT YOU?
PROFOUNDLY.
SIR, I THOUGHT STORM'S BODY WAS IMMUNE TO THE EFFECTS OF THE WEATHER.
THAT MAY BE
THE MOST FOOLISH THING
I'VE EVER
HEARD.


"IMMUNE TO WEATHER..."
WHAT COULD THAT POSSIBLY MEAN?
THAT SHE DOESN'T GET WET IN THE RAIN--
--WON'T GET BRUISED BY THE HAIL?
IT
PROFESSOR?
IT MEANS HER...
...MY...
...BODY CHANGES TEMP--
--RATURE.
SIR, THE RISK..?
IF SHE DIES WHILE YOU'RE IN HER MIND, YOU--
SHHHH.
IN ACCORDANCE TO ENVIR--
ENVIRONMENT.
COLDER AIR GETS--
--THE WARMER ORORO BECOMES?
AND VICE VERSA.
IN THE CENTER OF A RAGING BLIZZARD, SHE NEARLY--
FRIED HER SYSTEM.
THAT IS, UNTIL I PSIONICALLY COMPENSATED IT BY LOWERING HER BODY TEMPURATURE.
SHE'S EXHAUSTED, SCOTT-- BUT THE WORST IS OVER.
YOU REALIZE, PROFESSOR, YOU ALMOST LOST YOUR OWN LIFE WHILE SAVING HER?
YOUR POINT, SON?

SINCE THE DAY YOU THREW OPEN THE *DOORS* OF YOUR OWN *HOME*--
--SINCE YOU CREATED THE X-MEN...
... *YOUR ENTIRE LIFE* HAS BEEN A SACRIFICE FOR YOUR STUDENTS.
YOU EVEN LEFT *LILANDRA* TO BE WITH US.
WHAT ABOUT *YOU*, SIR? WHEN DO YOU GET TO LIVE YOUR *OWN* LIFE?
I'M CERTAIN I COULD ASK YOU THE *SAME* QUESTION, SCOTT.
THE *DIFFERENCE* BEING, I DIDN'T HAVE A LIFE *BEFORE* WE MET.
THERE WASN'T A SINGLE NIGHT AT THE ORPHANAGE THAT I DIDN'T LAY AWAKE FOR *HOURS*--*STARING* AT THE CEILING... WONDERING--
--WHY MY BROTHER ALEX GOT TO *LEAVE*--
--AND I HAD TO STAY AND BE PASSED UP BY *EVERY POTENTIAL* PARENT IN THE STATE OF NEBRASKA?
THEN ONE DAY... *YOU* ARRIVED.
YOU KNEW ABOUT MY "SECRET"--MY OPTIC BLAST--AND YOU TOLD ME I WAS *OKAY*.
MORE THAN OKAY... THAT I WAS DESTINED FOR SOMETHING SPECIAL. YOU *ENTRUSTED* ME WITH YOUR DREAM.
I NEVER HAD *ANYTHING* TO SACRIFICE, PROFESSOR...
... BECAUSE MY LIFE *BEGAN* WITH THE X-MEN.
THEN YOU'RE *WRONG*, SON.
OUR MOTIVES ARE NOT AS *DIFFERENT* AS YOU MIGHT THINK.
THERE IS *NOTHING* I WOULDN'T DO FOR *ANY* OF MY STUDENTS.
NOW, I'D LIKE *YOU* TO DO SOMETHING FOR *ME*, SCOTT.
STOP CALLING ME, "PROFESSOR."
ANYTHING.

I -- DON'T KNOW *WHAT* YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT, PRO--
SIR.
IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME, I SHOULD PLUG UP THIS *TEAR* IN THE COCKPIT BEFORE IT *WIDENS*.
CERTAINLY, BUT *DON'T* CHANGE THE SUBJECT.
EVERY STUDENT OF MY FIRST *GRADUATING* CLASS HAS RECONCILED THEMSELVES WITH ADDRESSING ME AS A *PERSON*, RATHER THAN THEIR *INSTRUCTOR*.
HENRY, JEAN, BOBBY, WARREN... THEY *ALL* HAVE, AT ONE TIME OR ANOTHER CALLED ME *CHARLES*.
IF WE ARE TO DIE, HERE AND NOW IN THE MIDDLE OF *NOWHERE*, I WOULD VERY MUCH LIKE IT TO BE AS *EQUALS*--
--RATHER THAN AS *STUDENT* AND TEACHER.
YOU'RE BEING *RIDICULOUS*. I COULD CALL YOU CHHH...
BY YOUR *FIRST* NAME.
I BELIEVE YOU'RE *BLUFFING*.
LET ME JUST ATTEND TO THIS FIRST.
USE SOME *DEBRIS* TO BLOCK THE WIND
NOW I BELIEVE YOU'RE *STALLING*.
NOT AT ALL. I WANT EVERYTHING IN ITS PLACE--
ZAKT
--WHEN I *PULVERIZE* IT WITH MY BLAST.
THERE YOU GO, CHHH--
CHRRA... RARRL
LLEES.
THEREYOUGO, CHARRAARRLLL...
CHARLES.
SAY IT *WITH* ME, SCO--
I *COULD* CALL YOU CHAARA-- BY BY YOUR FIRST NAME, IF I *WANTED* TO.
I JUST *CHOOSE* NOT TO.
YES, *WELL*. I *APPLAUD* YOUR SELF-CONTROL.

SEVERAL HUNDRED MILES AWAY, AND APPROACHING AT MACH 4...
AS *UNACCUSTOMED* AS I AM TO THIS ERA, PSYLOCKE -- I CONFESS TO BEING A BIT MORE *DISORIENTED* THAN USUAL.
THIS *ANTARCTIC* STORM SEEMS MORE VIOLENT THAN EVEN I WOULD HAVE IMAGINED.
YOUR INSTINCTS ARE *CORRECT*. THIS IS EVIDENTLY A *MANIFESTATION* OF THE ATTACK ON THE X-MEN WHICH *PRECIPITATED* THE--
BISHOP, HARD ABOUT!
FULL-STOP! *NOW!*
DON'T KNOW WHAT BROUGHT THAT *ON*--
--BUT IT HAD *BETTER* BE IMPORTANT ENOUGH TO DELAY OUR *RESCUE EFFORTS*.
IT MAY DO MORE THAN *THAT*, BISHOP.
ACCORDING TO THESE READINGS, THAT WALL OF ELECTRO-MAGNETIC *FLUX* MAY ABORT IT COMPLETELY.
ALONG WITH THE *REST* OF THE SHIP IF WE HAD *COLLIDED* WITH IT.
YOU'RE SAYING WE HAVE TO WAIT UNTIL IT *DISSIPATES?!*
BUT *HOW LONG* WILL *THAT* TAKE?
FAR LONGER, I'M *AFRAID*--
--THAN IT LOOKS LIKE *THEY HAVE*.

SHE WAKES WITHOUT A SOUND.
HER LIPS TOO PARCHED TO SPEAK THE NAME OF THE MAN SHE WAS DREAMING ABOUT.
IN THE DARKENED CABIN--
--IN THE FANCIFUL MOMENT BETWEEN SLEEP AND WAKE...
...SHE THINKS SHE SEES HIM.
FORGE?
SHE REACHES FOR HIM, FOR PROTECTION AGAINST THE COLD--
--A COLD THAT HAS GRIPPED HER HEART FROM THE MOMENT THAT HE LEFT.
SHE WANTS TO EXPLAIN TO HIM--
--TO SHARE WITH HIM...
...ALL THE REASONS WHY THEY SHOULDN'T BE TOGETHER.
BUT MORE IMPORTANTLY--
--WHY NONE OF THOSE REASONS MATTERS.
WHU--?!
ORORO?
YOU STARTLED ME -- I DIDN'T REALIZE YOU WERE AWAKE.
S-SCOTT? YOUR EYE...?
A PIECE OF RUBY QUARTZ THE PROFESSOR FOUND IN THE WRECKAGE...
...BUT ORORO, YOU LOOK... YOU SHOULDN'T BE UP.
I AM FIIINNNE...
FINE PEOPLE DON'T PASS OUT, STORM.

S-SCOTT, I D-DO NOT... UNDERSTAND.
S-SO C-COLD?
IT WILL PASS, THE PROFESSOR PROMISED.
YOU'LL BE FINE WITH A LITTLE REST. EVERYTHING WILL BE BETTER IN THE MORNING.
DO YOU THINK HE KNEW?
I'M SORRY...?
FORGE.
DO YOU THINK HE KNEW--
--HOW MUCH I LOVED HIM?
IF HE DIDN'T--
--HE WILL WHEN YOU TELL HIM.

THE MORNING.
SIR, STORM AND I THINK WE MAY HAVE COME UP WITH A VIABLE OPTION TO DYING.
IT'LL MEAN MANUALLY OVER-RIDING THE--
PROFESSOR?!
ORORO-- THE PROFESSOR'S GONE.
ONE FRANTIC SEARCH LATER...
HE TOOK THE ONLY ATV THAT WAS LEFT IN THE REMAINS OF THE CARGO HOLD.
EVEN WITH FORGE'S FINAGLING, ITS RANGE IS NOWHERE NEAR ENOUGH TO PUNCTURE THE E.M. INTERFERENCE RANGE.
WHAT COULD HE POSSIBLY HAVE HOPED TO ACCOMPLISH BY STRIKING OUT ON HIS OWN?
CHARLES IS NOT GIVEN TO IMPULSIVE BEHAVIOR, SCOTT.
IT IS POSSIBLE HE SENSED A LIFE OUT AMIDST THE HOSTILE TERRAIN--
--AND CHOSE TO CONFRONT IT ON HIS OWN.
THE QUESTION NOW, IS...
...WHAT CAN WE DO TO ASSIST HIM?
THAT ONE-IN-A-MILLION SUICIDE RUN WE PLANNED...
YES?
IT JUST BECAME OUR ONLY CHANCE.

TWENTY-MINUTES DISTANCE...
THEY WOULD HAVE STOPPED ME.
I WOULD HAVE STOPPED ME IF I'D THOUGHT THIS THROUGH.
CHRCHRCHRCHR
BUT THE PSIONIC IMPRINT I WAS PICKING UP WAS SO VAGUE--
--SO JUMBLED THROUGH THE..
INTERFERENCE FROM
THE BLAST?
IMPOSSIBLE.
THIS CAN'T BE THE ORIGIN OF THE ASSAULT ON THE BLACKBIRD--
--BECAUSE STORM NOTED A CHARRING AT GROUND ZERO.
WHOSOEVER RESIDES WITHIN THIS--THIS TOWER--MIGHT BE OUR ONLY HOPE.
CHRCHRCHRC

NO!
THE BITTER COLD HAS CAUSED THE ENGINE TO SEIZE!
RELAX, CHARLES.
AS USUAL, YOUR MIND IS ALL YOU HAVE GOING FOR YOU--
--LOSE YOUR HEAD, AND YOU'VE LOST EVERYTHING.
NOW, FORGE PREPARED FOR THIS EVENTUALITY... THE ATV IS EQUIPPED WITH A SELF-LUBRICATING ANTI-FREEZE PUMP, WHICH...
...ACCORDING TO THIS GAUGE--
--IS EMPTY?
HE REALIZES WHAT HAPPENED--
--THAT THE INITIAL CRASH MUST HAVE DAMAGED THIS VEHICLE AS WELL.
A VEHICLE WHICH BROUGHT HIM A HAIR'S BREADTH FROM SANCTUARY.
A VEHICLE HE NOW ABANDONS.
C-CRAZY
NO OTHER CH-CHOICE
SCOTT
ORRRORO
CAN'T
WON'T
LET
YOU
DOWN

WITHIN THE HOUR...
IT IS INFINITELY EASIER FOR ME TO MANUEVER THE ESCAPE POD--
--THAN IT WAS THE ENTIRE BLACKBIRD. IF ONLY WE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO EJECT THIS COCKPIT DURING THE INITIAL ASSAULT...
WOULD HAVE BEEN IMPOSSIBLE, STORM-- THE BLAST SHORTED OUT ALL THE SHIP'S MAIN CIRCUITS.
WE'D STILL BE STATIONARY IF YOU AND I HADN'T MANAGED TO RELEASE THE POD THROUGH MANUAL OVERRIDE
ANY SIGN OF THE PROFESSOR?
I AM AFRAID I AM ALL BUT BLINDED, SCOTT.
I KNOW THE FEELING.
FORTUNATELY, THE JURY-RIGGED SENSORS ARE HOLDING. A MIRACLE IF YOU CONSIDER I USED HALF THE COMM-BADGES FROM--
PERFECT.
Ping!
STORM, TAKE HER DOWN!
YOU HAVE FOUND HIM?
LET'S HOPE SO!
ACCORDING TO THE SENSORS, HE'S STILL ALIVE.
SIR...?
IT'S US, SIR-- WE'VE COME TO BRING YOU HOME.

WITHOUT SO MUCH AS A "WHAT'S YOUR SIGN?"
REALLY, CYCLOPS--
--WHAT KIND OF WOMAN DO YOU TAKE ME FOR?
AS IF SHARING A SINGLE MIND--
--BOTH TEAM LEADERS OF X-MEN ACT SIMULTANEOUSLY.
WITHOUT A WORD BETWEEN THEM, STORM AND CYCLOPS COME TO THE SAME CONCLUSION:
THIS YOUNG WOMAN IS THE MUTANT RESPONSIBLE FOR THE AMBUSH.
MORE IMPORTANLY, ANY AMOUNT OF DAMAGE SHE CAUSED TO THE BLACKBIRD--
--WAS NOMINAL COMPARED TO THE INJURIES SHE COULD INFLICT UPON THEM!
NOT THAT EITHER OF YOU WILL BE ALIVE TO SEND A GIFT, BUT IF ANYONE IN THE HEREAFTER ASKS--
--SIENA BLAZE IS A CAPRICORN!
TOGETHER, THEY AVOID HER MOST RECENT ASSAULT...

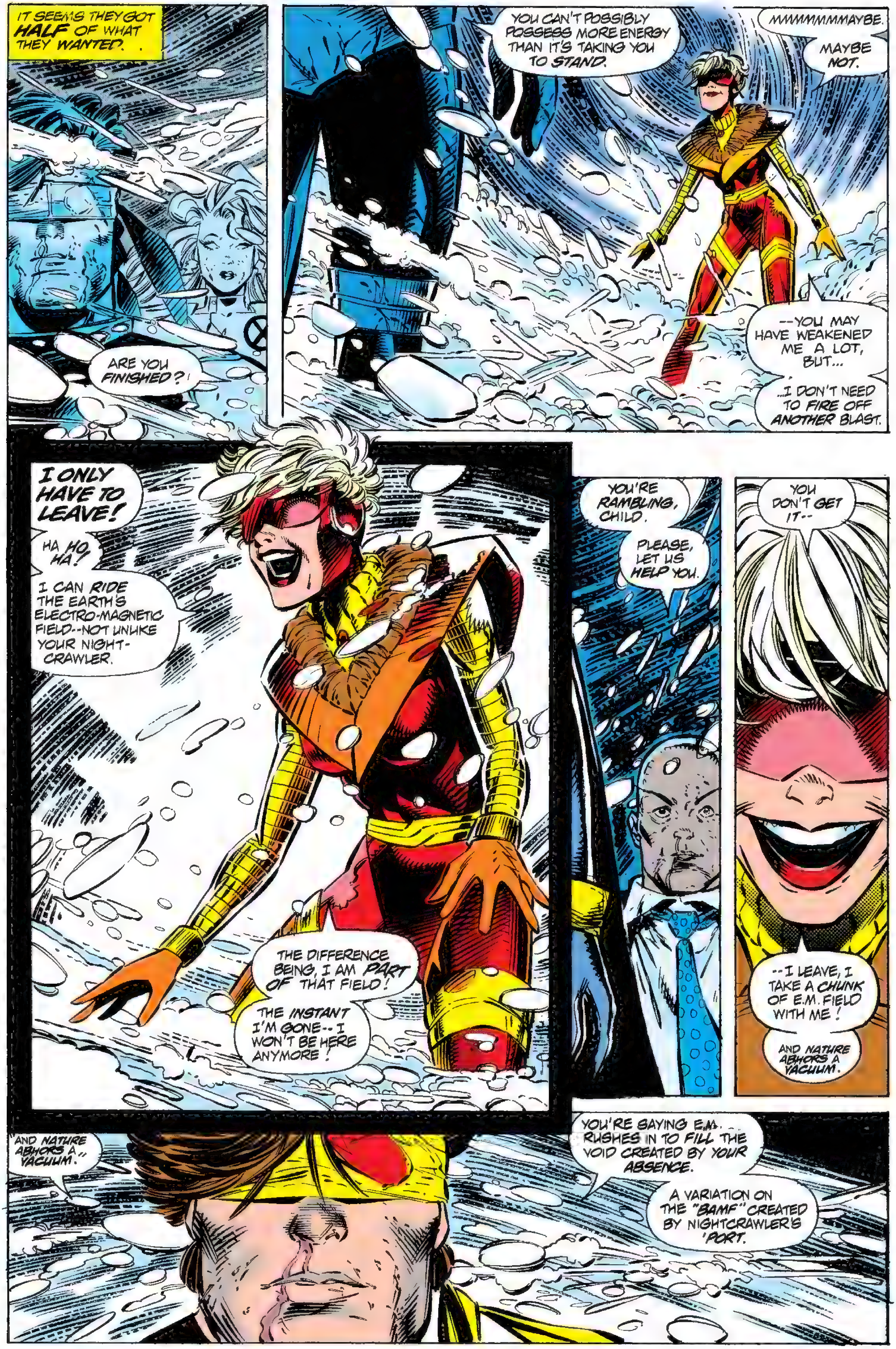
...AND IMMEDIATELY--
--INSTINCTIVELY--
--RETURN HER FAVOR IN KIND!
HOW IS IT POSSIBLE THAT YOU PEOPLE ARE STILL ALIVE?!
DON'T YOU KNOW WHEN TO GIVE UP?!
THAT WILL NOT HAPPEN, YOUNG WOMAN, WHILE THERE ARE MANY QUESTIONS LEFT UNANSWERED!
THE FIRST AMONG THEM BEING--WHY ARE YOU SO DETERMINED TO KILL THE X-MEN?
AND RIGHT BEHIND THAT... HOW IS IT YOU'RE SHRUGGING OFF THE COMBINED EFFECT OF MY OPTIC BLAST AND STORM'S COMPACT HURRICANE?
IN THE ORDER THEY WERE ASKED...
A) I THOUGHT IT'D BE A FUN WAY TO KILL A WEEKEND.
B) THE TWO OF YOU ARE ABOUT TO DROP DEAD FROM EXHAUSTION--
--WHILE I HAVEN'T EVEN USED A FRACTION OF MY POWER!
ZZWT!
WHICH IS JUST AS WELL FOR THE REST OF THE PLANET, CONSIDERING EVERY TIME I TEAR THE E.M. FIELD, I RUN THE RISK OF SPLITTING THE EARTH LIKE A RIPE MELON.

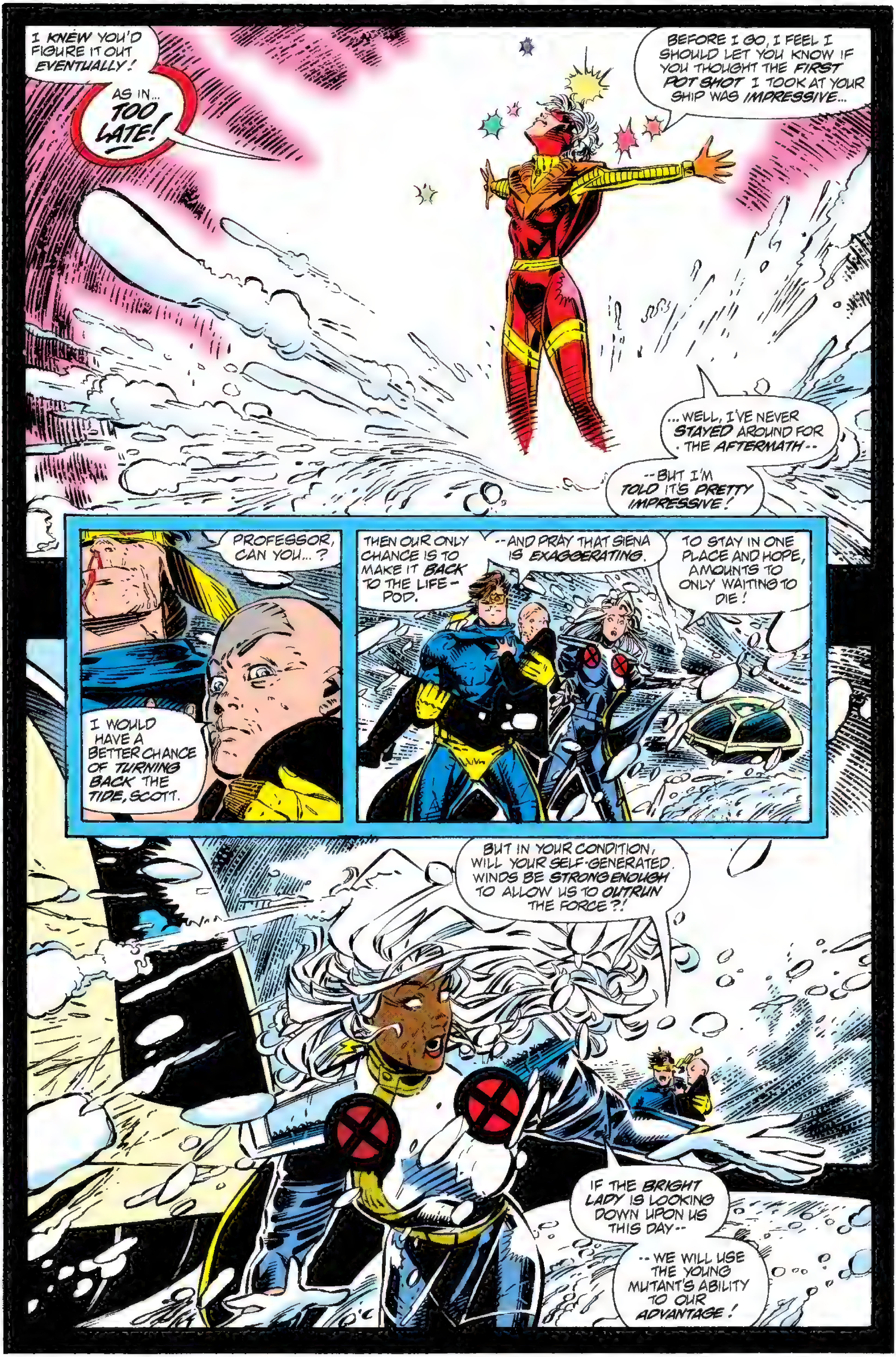
BUT AS I NEVER SAID UNTIL THIS MOMENT--
IF YOU'RE TELLING THE TRUTH-- IT'S NOT JUST YOUR LIFE YOU'RE RISKING...
... BUT THAT OF EVERY LIVING BEING...
...ON THIS PLANET.
ANNNND? SO?
--WHERE'S THE JOY OF LIVING IF YOU DON'T TAKE CHANCES?
GROWING UP A MUTANT, CYCLOPS-- YOU KNOW MOST PEOPLE DON'T GO OUT OF THEIR WAY TO MAKE YOU FEEL COMFORTABLE.
NO ONE ON THIS GREAT GREEN EARTH OF OURS EVER WATCHED OUT FOR ME--
--WHY SHOULD I GO OUT OF MY WAY FOR THE REST OF THE PEOPLE ON THE PLANET?
MAYBE TO BE
BETTER THAN
THEM.
HA!
I'M NOT BETTER, CYCLOPS.
I'M THE WORST.
"THEY" MADE ME WHO I AM TODAY.
NOW THEY'LL JUST HAVE TO...
...DEAL WITH IT!
SCHUNK!
WHA--?! MY FOOT...
...WENT RIGHT THROUGH HIS HEAD?!
BUT, I DON'T HAVE THE POWER TO DO THAT!
NO. BUT I DO...

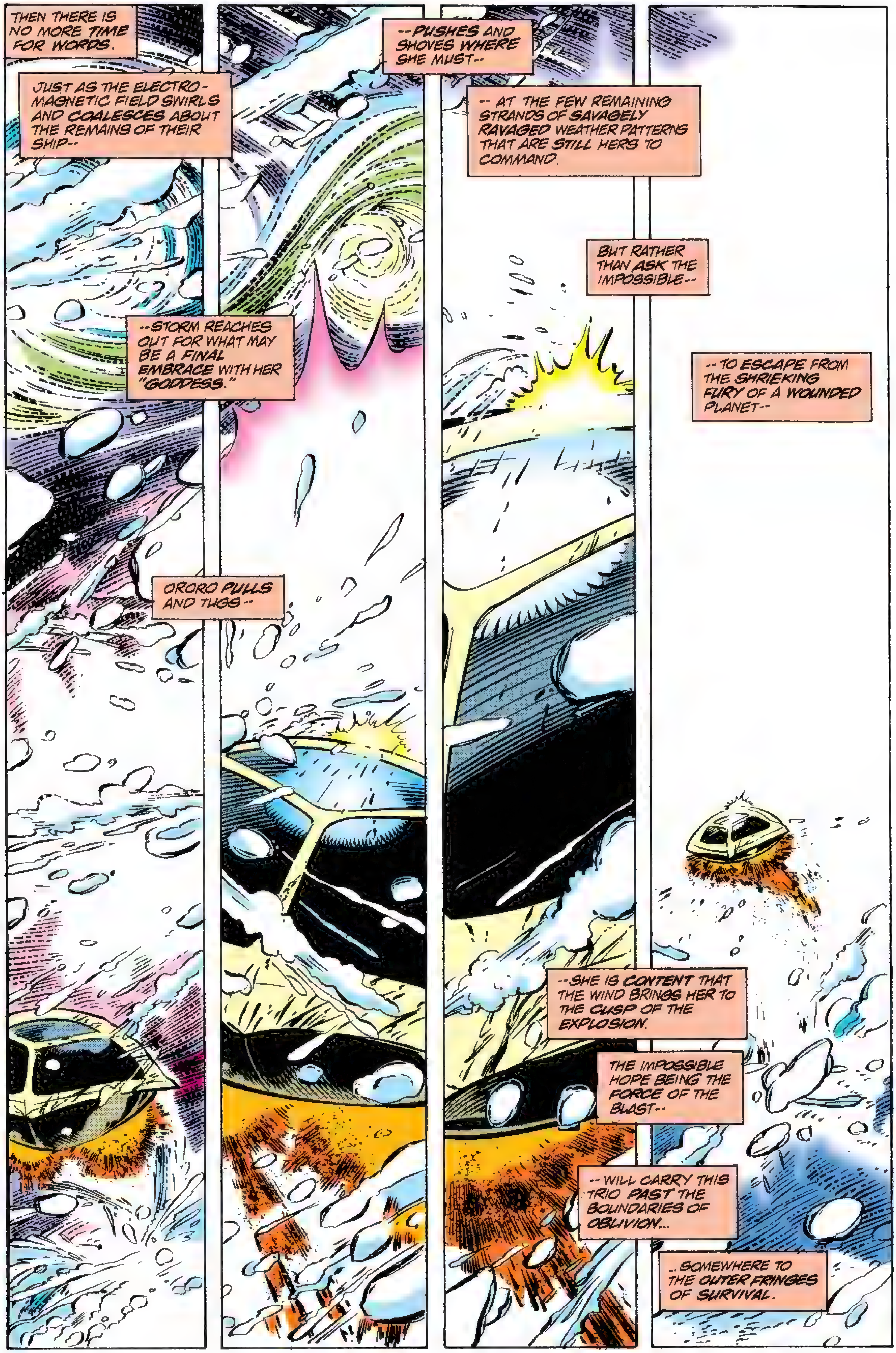
...IN A MANNER OF SPEAKING.
MORE PRECISELY, I CREATED AN ILLUSION IN YOUR MIND.
WHILE IT IS AN ASPECT OF MY MENTAL POWERS, I'M NORMALLY AVERSE TO EMPLOY. IN YOUR CASE, MS. BLAZE, I MADE AN EXCEPTION.
THE PROFESSOR GAVE US THE OPPORTUNITY TO RECOVER--TO GET OUR BEARINGS.
NOW, WE'RE GIVING YOU THE OPPORTUNITY TO SURRENDER.
OH, PUH-LEAZE PEOPLE--
--WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO, LAND ON ME WHEN YOU DROP DEAD?!
THIS WAS FUN AT FIRST...
...BUT IT HAS GONE ON LONG ENOUGH!
I COULD NOT AGREE WITH YOU MORE.

OH, THIS ROTS!
YOU PSIONICALLY CUT ME OFF FROM MY POWER-- DIDN'T YOU, XAVIER?!
NOT AT ALL.
BUT HE DID MANAGE TO KEEP YOUR BODY FROM REGISTERING THE EFFECTS OF YOUR ELECTRO-MAGNETIC BIO-BLAST.
THAT WAS STUPID! ALL IT MEANS IS MY BODY IS BUILDING UP A MAJOR CHARGE--
--ONLY MY MIND ISN'T GOING TO BE ABLE TO CONTROL IT!
TRUST US.
ZAKT!
WE'VE GOT IT COVERED.
FIRST, BY BURYING YOU IN THE SIDE OF THIS GLACIER...
BCKRUNNCH!
...IN HOPES IT WILL ABSORB THE BRUNT OF THE BLAST.
"HALP! HALP! AH'M BEIN' ATTACKED BY A MOUNTAIN OF ICE!"
GET REAL, XSTERS.
I CAN ALREADY FEEL MY POWER BUILDING PAST CRITICAL.
SAY "SEE YA," CHUMPS.
NOW, MY STUDENTS--
--AS WE PLANNED!

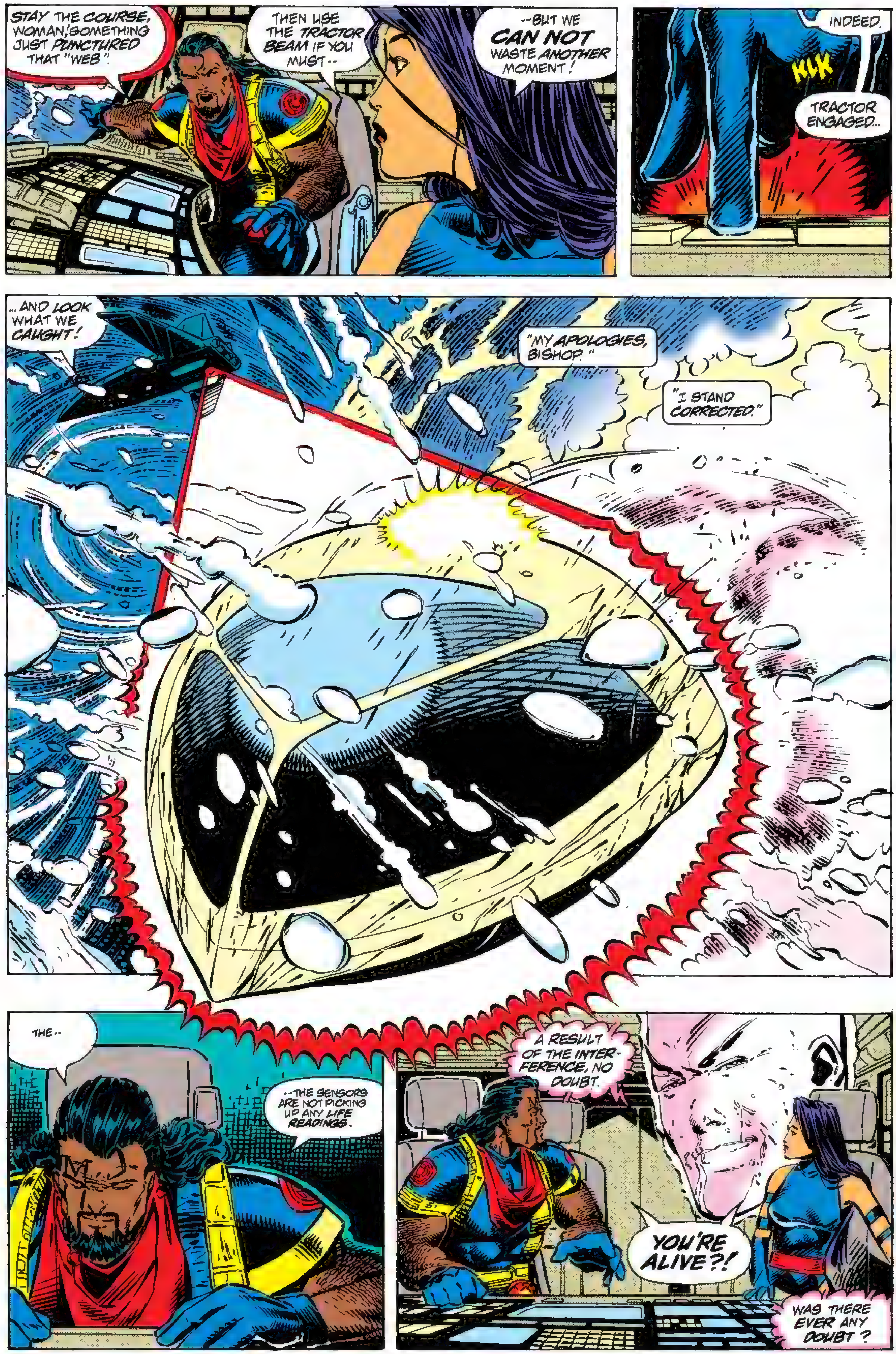
THERE IS A REASON WHY THE X-MEN ARE A TEAM...
... WHY CHARLES XAVIER -- FOR ALL HIS MENTAL PROWESS -- ASSEMBLED A GROUP OF MUTANTS TO WORK TOGETHER.
BECAUSE HE KNEW FROM THE BEGINNING--
--BEFORE STRYFE--
--BEFORE MAGNETO--
--EVEN BEFORE THE SHADOW KING --
--THAT THERE ARE SOME THREATS THAT CAN ONLY BE OVERCOME BY SEVERAL PEOPLE ACTING IN COMPLETE HARMONY.
WITNESS THE FALL OF SIENA BLAZE.
ACCOMPLISHED THROUGH THE COMBINED MIGHT OF STORM'S ELECTRICALLY CHARGED AND WIND-GENERATED TUNNEL DIRECTING THE YOUNG WOMAN'S POWER UPWARD --
-- AND CYCLOPS' OPTIC BLAST PREVENTING ANY EXCESS ENERGY FROM HARMING THE TRIO.
THEIR GOAL IS TO, AT LEAST TEMPORARILY, BURN OUT THE YOUNG MUTANT'S POWER...
... AND LIVE THROUGH THE EXPERIENCE.


IT SEEMS THEY GOT **HALF** OF WHAT THEY *WANTED*.
ARE YOU *FINISHED?*
YOU CAN'T POSSIBLY POSSESS MORE ENERGY THAN IT'S TAKING YOU TO *STAND*.
MMMMMMMAYBE.
MAYBE *NOT*.
--YOU MAY HAVE WEAKENED ME A LOT, BUT...
...I DON'T NEED TO *FIRE OFF ANOTHER BLAST*.
I ONLY HAVE TO LEAVE!
HA *HO* HA!
I CAN *RIDE* THE EARTH'S ELECTRO-MAGNETIC FIELD--NOT UNLIKE YOUR NIGHT-CRAWLER.
THE DIFFERENCE BEING, I AM *PART* OF THAT FIELD!
THE *INSTANT* I'M GONE-- I WON'T BE HERE ANYMORE!
YOU'RE *RAMBLING*, CHILD.
PLEASE, LET US *HELP* YOU.
YOU DON'T *GET* IT--
--I LEAVE, I TAKE A *CHUNK* OF E.M. FIELD WITH ME!
AND *NATURE ABHORS* A *VACUUM*.
"AND *NATURE ABHORS* A *VACUUM*."
YOU'RE SAYING E.M. RUSHES IN TO *FILL* THE VOID CREATED BY *YOUR ABSENCE*.
A VARIATION ON THE *"BAMF"* CREATED BY NIGHTCRAWLER'S *'PORT*.

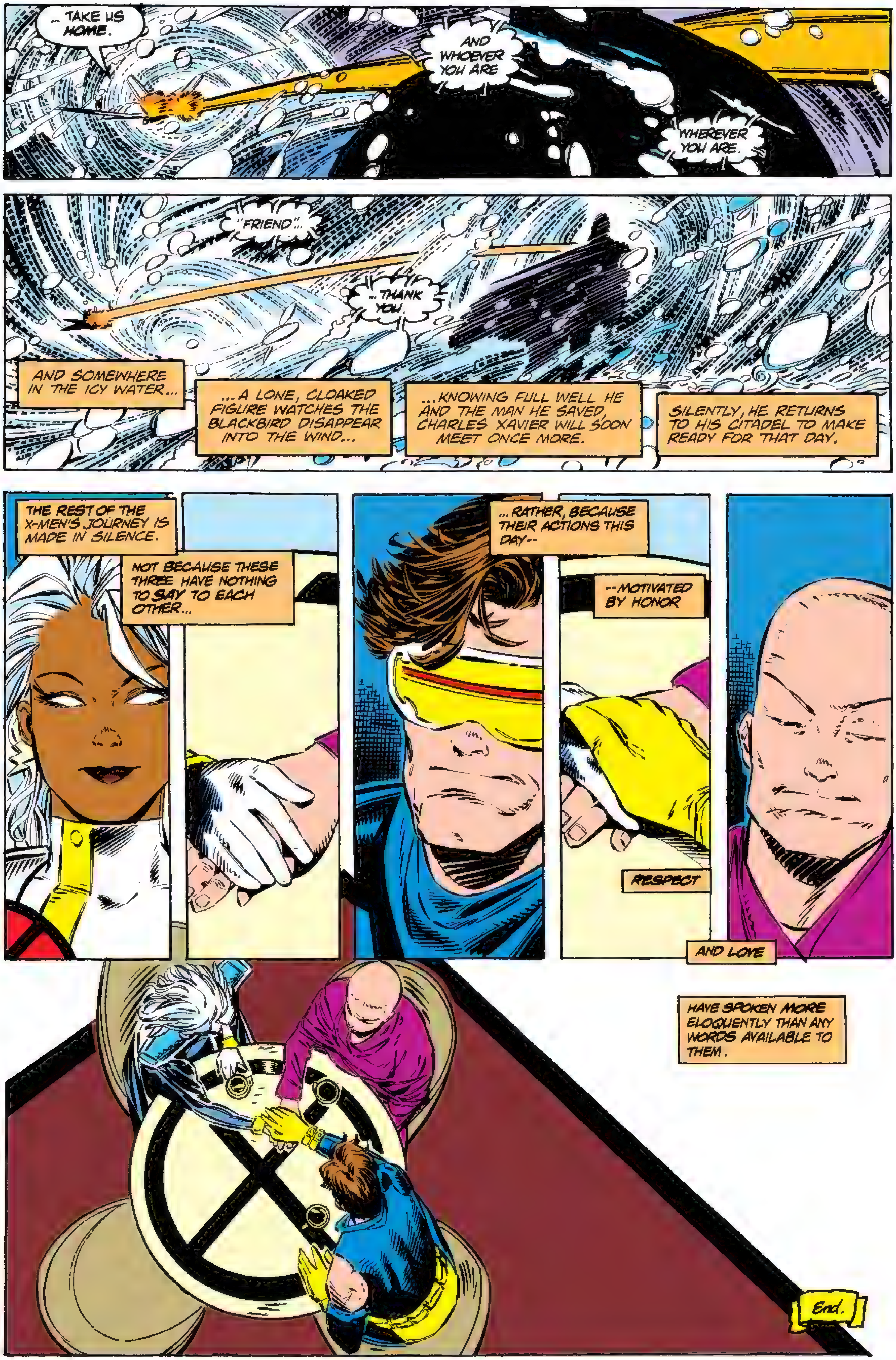

I KNEW YOU'D FIGURE IT OUT EVENTUALLY!
AS IN... TOO LATE!
BEFORE I GO, I FEEL I SHOULD LET YOU KNOW IF YOU THOUGHT THE FIRST POT SHOT I TOOK AT YOUR SHIP WAS IMPRESSIVE...
...WELL, I'VE NEVER STAYED AROUND FOR THE AFTERMATH--
--BUT I'M TOLD IT'S PRETTY IMPRESSIVE!
PROFESSOR, CAN YOU...?
I WOULD HAVE A BETTER CHANCE OF TURNING BACK THE TIDE, SCOTT.
THEN OUR ONLY CHANCE IS TO MAKE IT BACK TO THE LIFE-POD.
--AND PRAY THAT SIENA IS EXAGGERATING.
TO STAY IN ONE PLACE AND HOPE, AMOUNTS TO ONLY WAITING TO DIE!
BUT IN YOUR CONDITION, WILL YOUR SELF-GENERATED WINDS BE STRONG ENOUGH TO ALLOW US TO OUTRUN THE FORCE?!
IF THE BRIGHT LADY IS LOOKING DOWN UPON US THIS DAY--
--WE WILL USE THE YOUNG MUTANT'S ABILITY TO OUR ADVANTAGE!


THEN THERE IS NO MORE TIME FOR WORDS.
JUST AS THE ELECTRO-MAGNETIC FIELD SWIRLS AND COALESCES ABOUT THE REMAINS OF THEIR SHIP--
--STORM REACHES OUT FOR WHAT MAY BE A FINAL EMBRACE WITH HER "GODDESS."
ORORO PULLS AND TUGS--
--PUSHES AND SHOVES WHERE SHE MUST--
-- AT THE FEW REMAINING STRANDS OF SAVAGELY RAVAGED WEATHER PATTERNS THAT ARE STILL HERS TO COMMAND.
BUT RATHER THAN ASK THE IMPOSSIBLE--
--TO ESCAPE FROM THE SHRIEKING FURY OF A WOUNDED PLANET--
--SHE IS CONTENT THAT THE WIND BRINGS HER TO THE CUSP OF THE EXPLOSION.
THE IMPOSSIBLE HOPE BEING THE FORCE OF THE BLAST--
--WILL CARRY THIS TRIO PAST THE BOUNDARIES OF OBLIVION...
...SOMEWHERE TO THE OUTER FRINGES OF SURVIVAL.

ELSEWHERE...
YOU REALIZE, BISHOP... THERE IS NOTHING *MORE* WE CAN ACCOMPLISH HERE.
UNLESS YOUR INTENT IS THAT *WE* DIE HERE *AS WELL*.
THEY *AREN'T* DEAD.
FINE.
THEN WE SHOULD AT LEAST *SPARE* THEM THE SIGHT OF ESCAPING FROM THAT E.M. WEB, ONLY TO DISCOVER OUR *CHARRED BODIES* IN THE *WRECKAGE* OF THIS SHIP.
MAKE NO MISTAKE. IF WE DO NOT *RETURN* TO THE MANSION TO REFUEL--
--*IMMEDIATELY*--
--WE WILL BE OF *NO USE* TO ANYONE, BECAUSE IT WILL BE *YOU* AND I WHO ARE *DEAD*!
TURN THE SHIP AROUND, THEN.
BUT *ONLY* AS LONG AS IT TAKES TO REFUEL.
AGREED.
YOU SHOULD, HOWEVER, *PREPARE* YOURSELF--
I'M *NOT* A CHILD, PSYLOCKE. I REALIZE THERE'S *NO POSSIBLE*--
VMMSH
WHA--?!

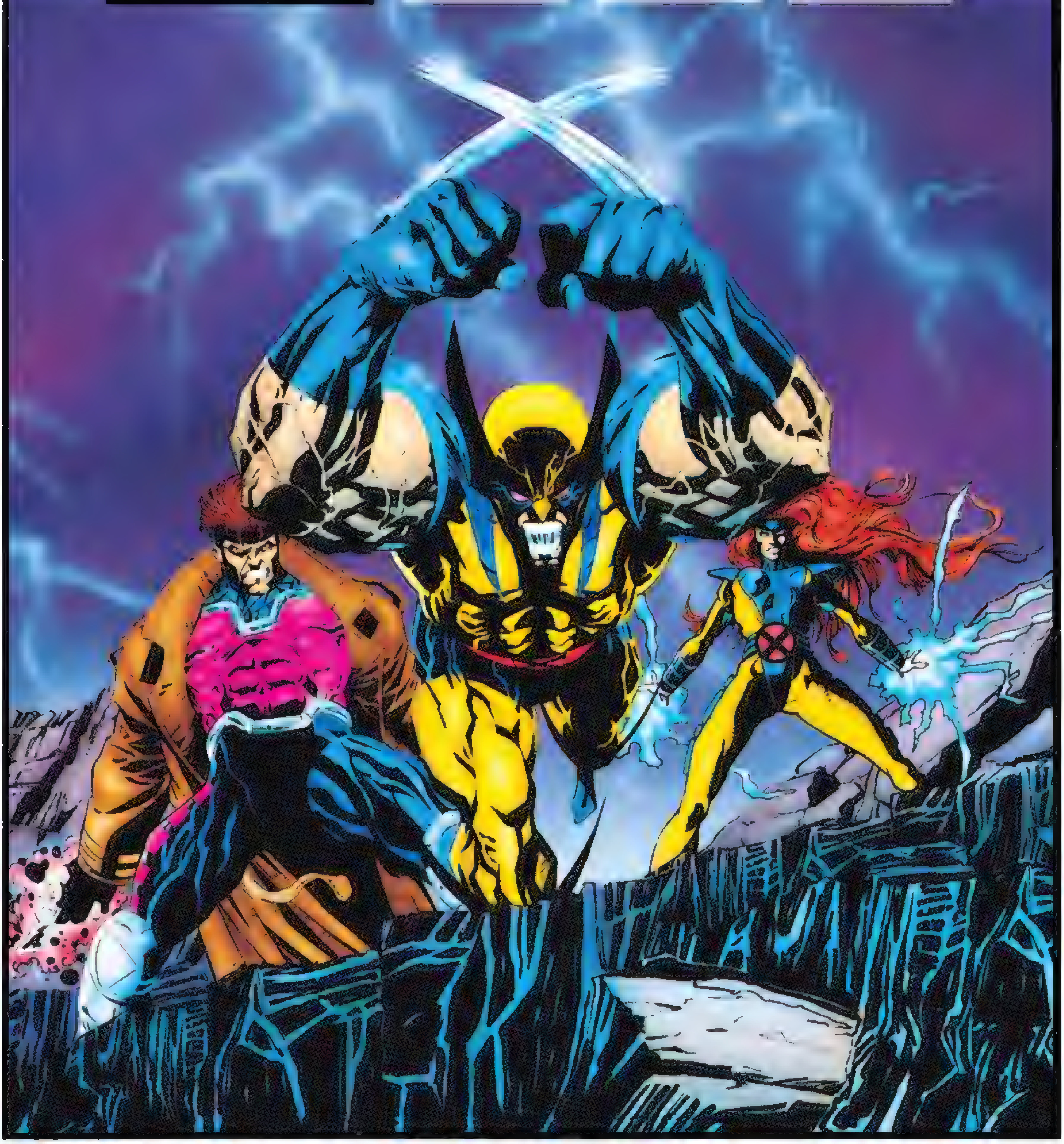

STAY THE COURSE, WOMAN, SOMETHING JUST PUNCTURED THAT "WEB".
THEN USE THE TRACTOR BEAM IF YOU MUST--
--BUT WE CAN NOT WASTE ANOTHER MOMENT!
INDEED.
KLK
TRACTOR ENGAGED...
...AND LOOK WHAT WE CAUGHT!
"MY APOLOGIES, BISHOP."
"I STAND CORRECTED."
THE--
--THE SENSORS ARE NOT PICKING UP ANY LIFE READINGS.
A RESULT OF THE INTERFERENCE, NO DOUBT.
YOU'RE ALIVE?!
WAS THERE EVER ANY DOUBT?

LATER...
I AM STILL *UNCLEAR*, CHARLES...
...AS TO HOW YOU MANAGED TO *SURVIVE* ONCE YOU WERE *STRANDED* IN THE BLIZZARD.
THEN WE'VE SOMETHING IN COMMON, ORORO.
THE LAST THING I RECALL BEFORE PASSING OUT, WAS LYING FACE DOWN IN THE SNOW...
...COMFORTED, ON *SOME LEVEL*, BY THE KNOWLEDGE I'D SOON BE *REUNITED* WITH ALL THE X-MEN WHO HAVE GONE BEFORE US.
AS *FATE*--OR A *MYSTERIOUS BENEFACTOR*--WOULD HAVE IT...
"...I AWOKE SOMEWHERE INSIDE THE TOWER I'D *GLIMPSED* FROM THE DISTANCE.
"FREE FROM THE ELECTRO-MAGNETIC DISTURBANCE WHICH RAGED JUST OUTSIDE...
"...A QUICK *PSIONIC PROBE* OF THE FACILITY FAILED TO IDENTIFY THE PERSON RESPONSIBLE FOR SAVING MY LIFE.
"IT WAS OBVIOUS THE INDIVIDUAL WANTED TO REMAIN *ANONYMOUS*.
"EQUALLY APPARENT WAS MY HOST'S *NEED* FOR PRIVACY.
"PROVIDED WITH A *HOVER-DISK* WHICH RESPONDED TO MY *MENTAL COMMANDS*--
--I RETURNED TO THE TWO OF YOU IN HOPES WE COULD RETURN TO THE TOWER *TOGETHER*.
IN THE RESULTING *BATTLE* WITH MS. BLAZE, I'M AFRAID--
--IT WOULD BE NEARLY IMPOSSIBLE TO LOCATE THE COMPLEX.
SIR, WE'VE COMPLETELY BIO-SCANNED THE *AREA*...
...THERE'S NO *SIGN* OF MS. BLAZE.
AS WE *SUSPECTED*.
THEN WE'VE DONE *ALL* WE CAN HERE, *PSYLOCKE*...


... TAKE US HOME.
AND WHOEVER YOU ARE
WHEREVER YOU ARE.
"FRIEND"...
... THANK YOU
AND SOMEWHERE IN THE ICY WATER...
...A LONE, CLOAKED FIGURE WATCHES THE BLACKBIRD DISAPPEAR INTO THE WIND...
...KNOWING FULL WELL HE AND THE MAN HE SAVED, CHARLES XAVIER WILL SOON MEET ONCE MORE.
SILENTLY, HE RETURNS TO HIS CITADEL TO MAKE READY FOR THAT DAY.
THE REST OF THE X-MEN'S JOURNEY IS MADE IN SILENCE.
NOT BECAUSE THESE THREE HAVE NOTHING TO SAY TO EACH OTHER...
...RATHER, BECAUSE THEIR ACTIONS THIS DAY--
--MOTIVATED BY HONOR
RESPECT
AND LOVE
HAVE SPOKEN MORE ELOQUENTLY THAN ANY WORDS AVAILABLE TO THEM.
End.

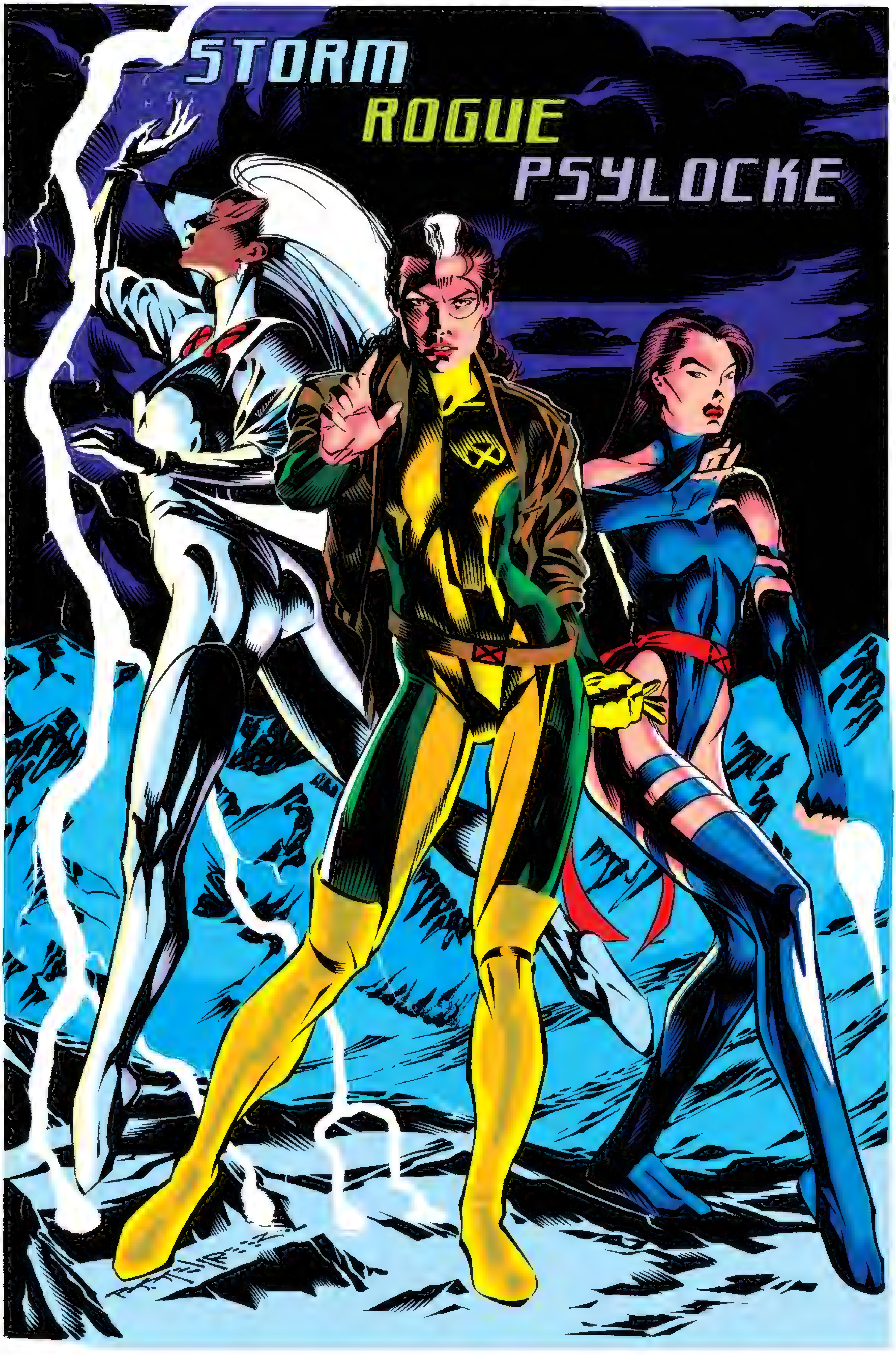
X-MEN GALLERY

JOE QUESADA JIMMY PALMIOTTI PAGE57
KERRY GAMMILL CHRIS IVY PAGE58
MARK BAGLEY TERRY AUSTIN PAGE59
BRIAN STELFREEZE PAGE60
GREG CAPULLO PAGE61
JOE QUESADA JIMMY PALMIOTTI PAGE62



CYCLOPS
Gammill•Ivy

WOLVERINE
COLOSSUS
BAGLEY & austin


STORM
ROGUE
PSYLOCKE

CABLE
1993

X-MEN®

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20
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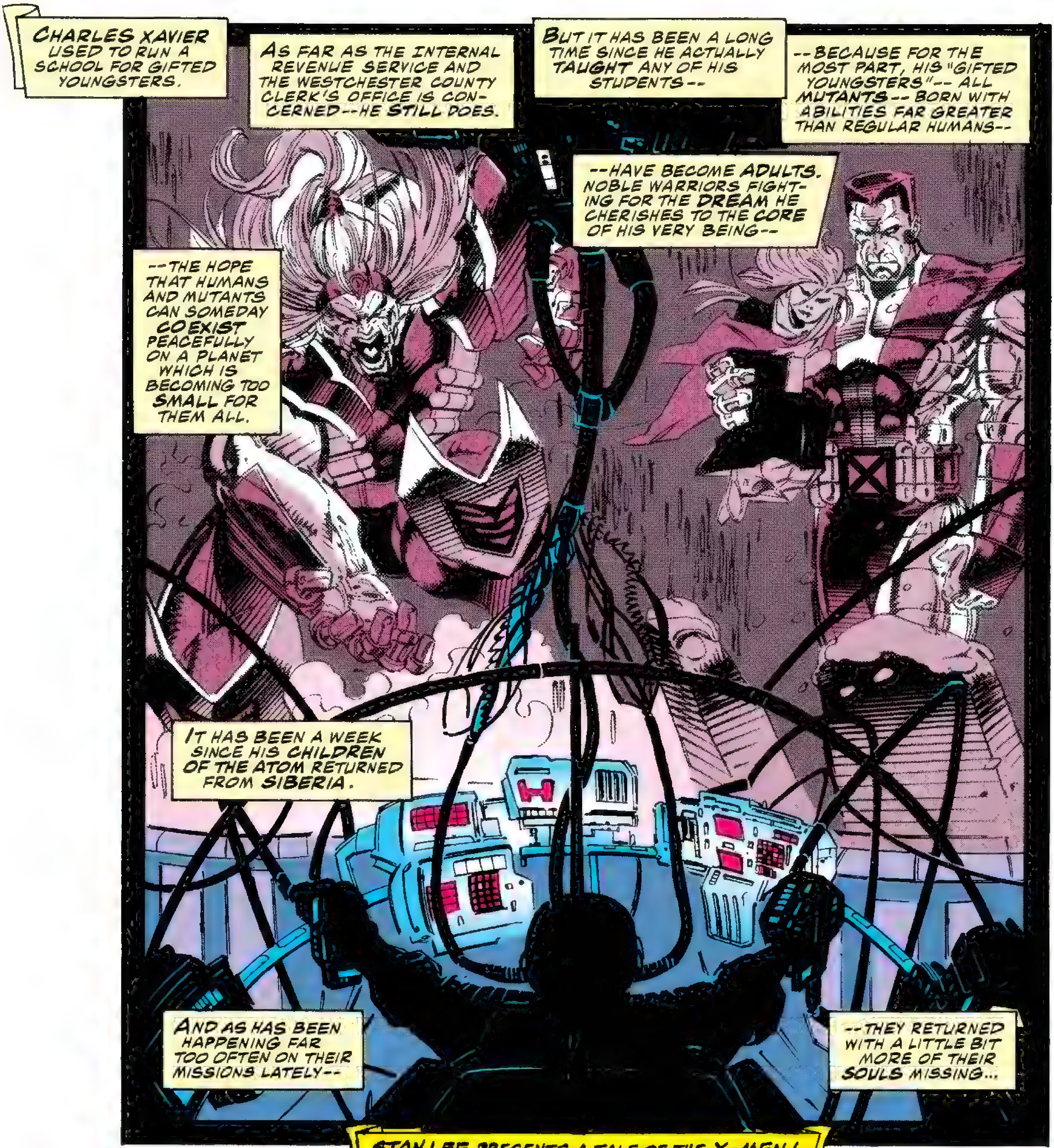
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
Andy Kubert
M. PENNINGTON
30 YEARS
X MEN
1963-1993
GUESS WHO'S BACK?

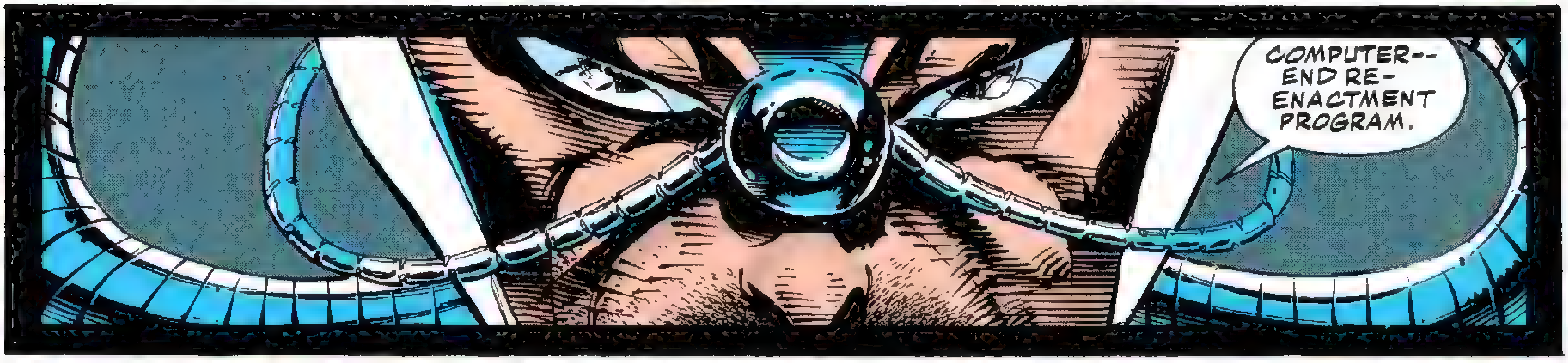

CHARLES XAVIER USED TO RUN A SCHOOL FOR GIFTED YOUNGSTERS.
AS FAR AS THE INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE AND THE WESTCHESTER COUNTY CLERK'S OFFICE IS CONCERNED--HE STILL DOES.
BUT IT HAS BEEN A LONG TIME SINCE HE ACTUALLY TAUGHT ANY OF HIS STUDENTS--
--BECAUSE FOR THE MOST PART, HIS "GIFTED YOUNGSTERS"-- ALL MUTANTS-- BORN WITH ABILITIES FAR GREATER THAN REGULAR HUMANS--
--HAVE BECOME ADULTS. NOBLE WARRIORS FIGHTING FOR THE DREAM HE CHERISHES TO THE CORE OF HIS VERY BEING--
--THE HOPE THAT HUMANS AND MUTANTS CAN SOMEDAY COEXIST PEACEFULLY ON A PLANET WHICH IS BECOMING TOO SMALL FOR THEM ALL.
IT HAS BEEN A WEEK SINCE HIS CHILDREN OF THE ATOM RETURNED FROM SIBERIA.
AND AS HAS BEEN HAPPENING FAR TOO OFTEN ON THEIR MISSIONS LATELY--
--THEY RETURNED WITH A LITTLE BIT MORE OF THEIR SOULS MISSING...

STAN LEE PRESENTS A TALE OF THE X-MEN!

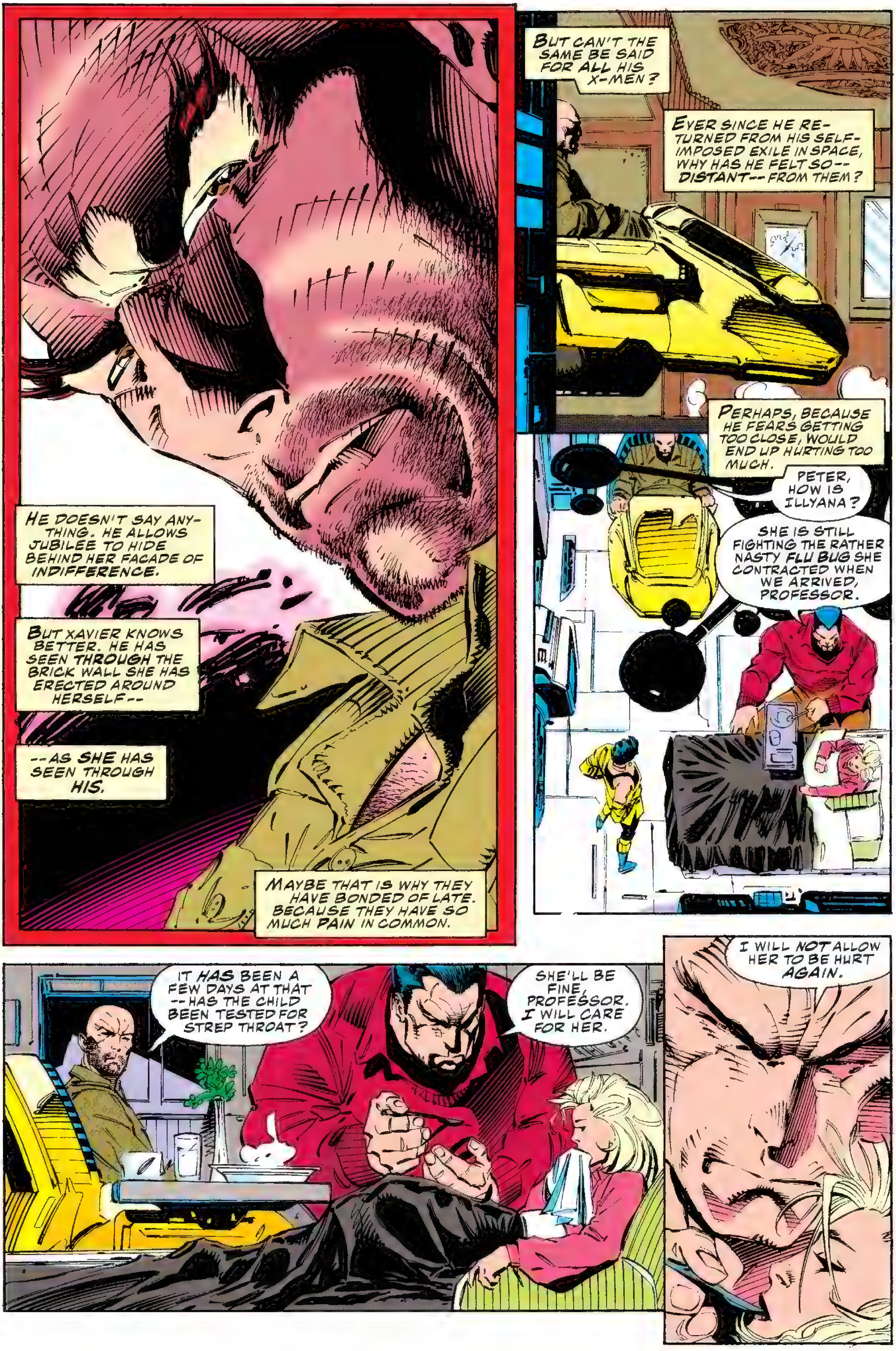
DIGGING IN THE DIRT

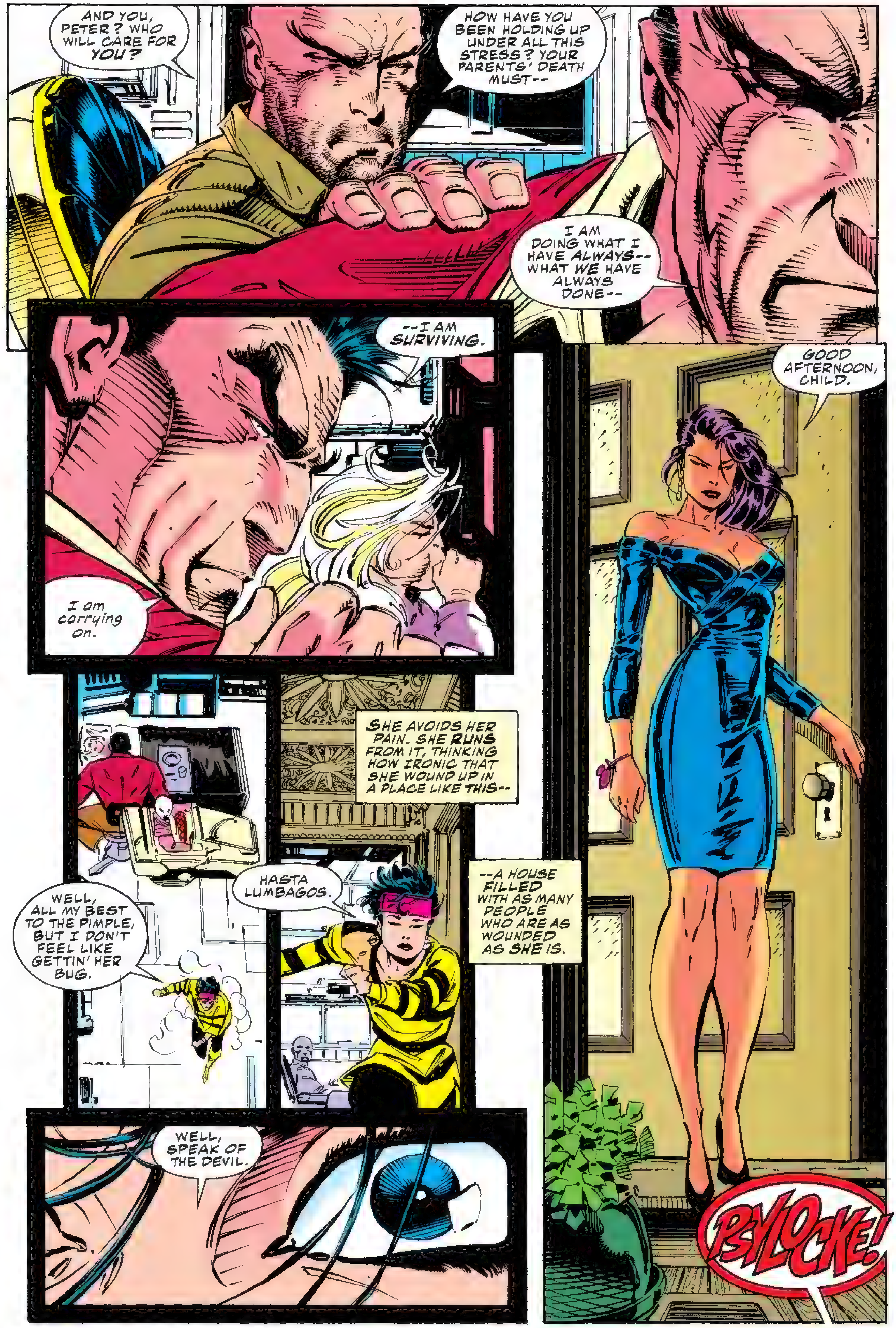
by FABIAN NICIEZA & ANDY KUBERT

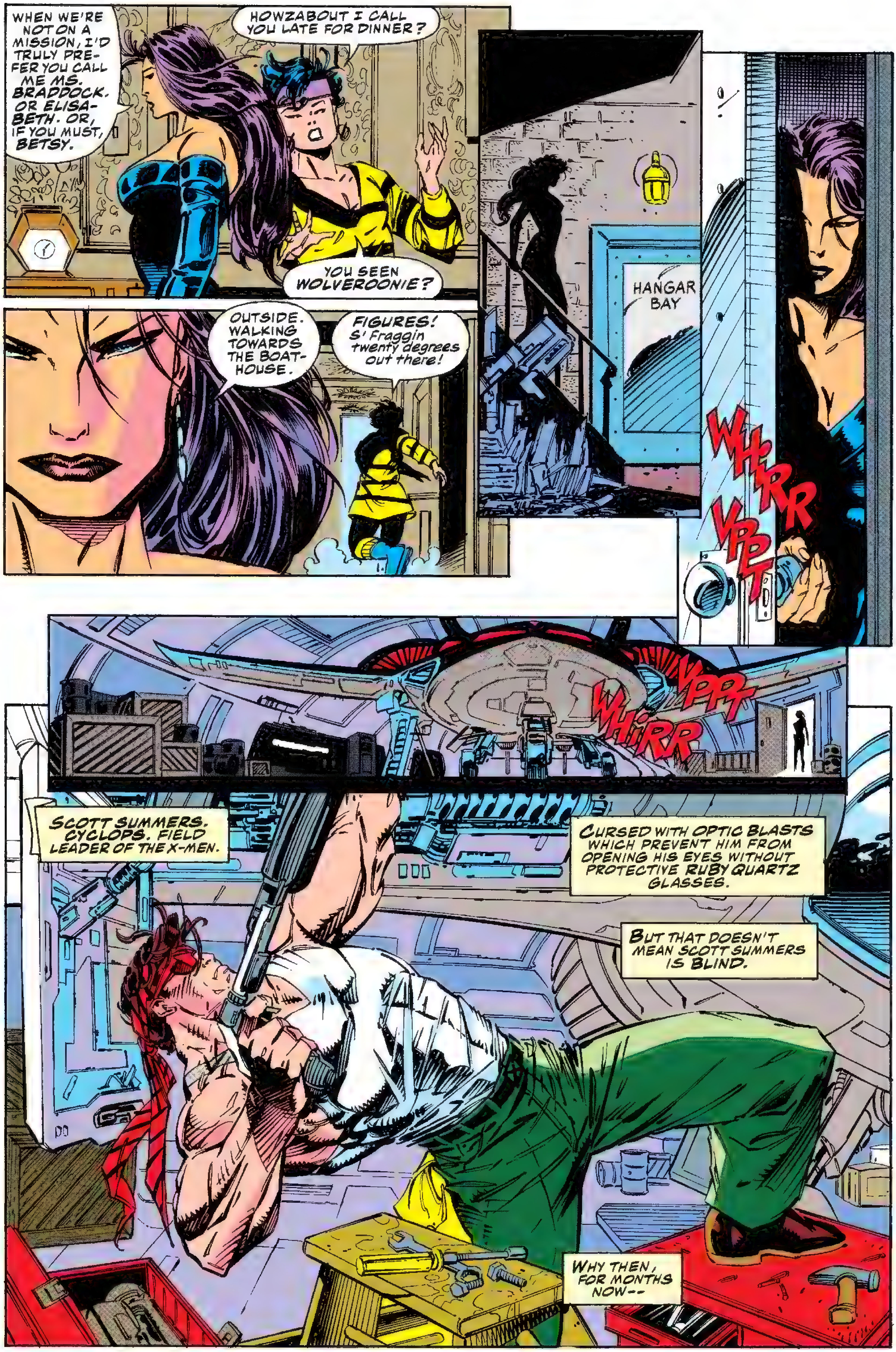
MARK PENNINGTON / BOB WIACEK (PGS. 22,23) INKERS | BILL OAKLEY LETTERER | JOE ROSAS COLORIST | BOB HARRAS EDITOR | TOM DEFALCO EDITOR IN CHIEF

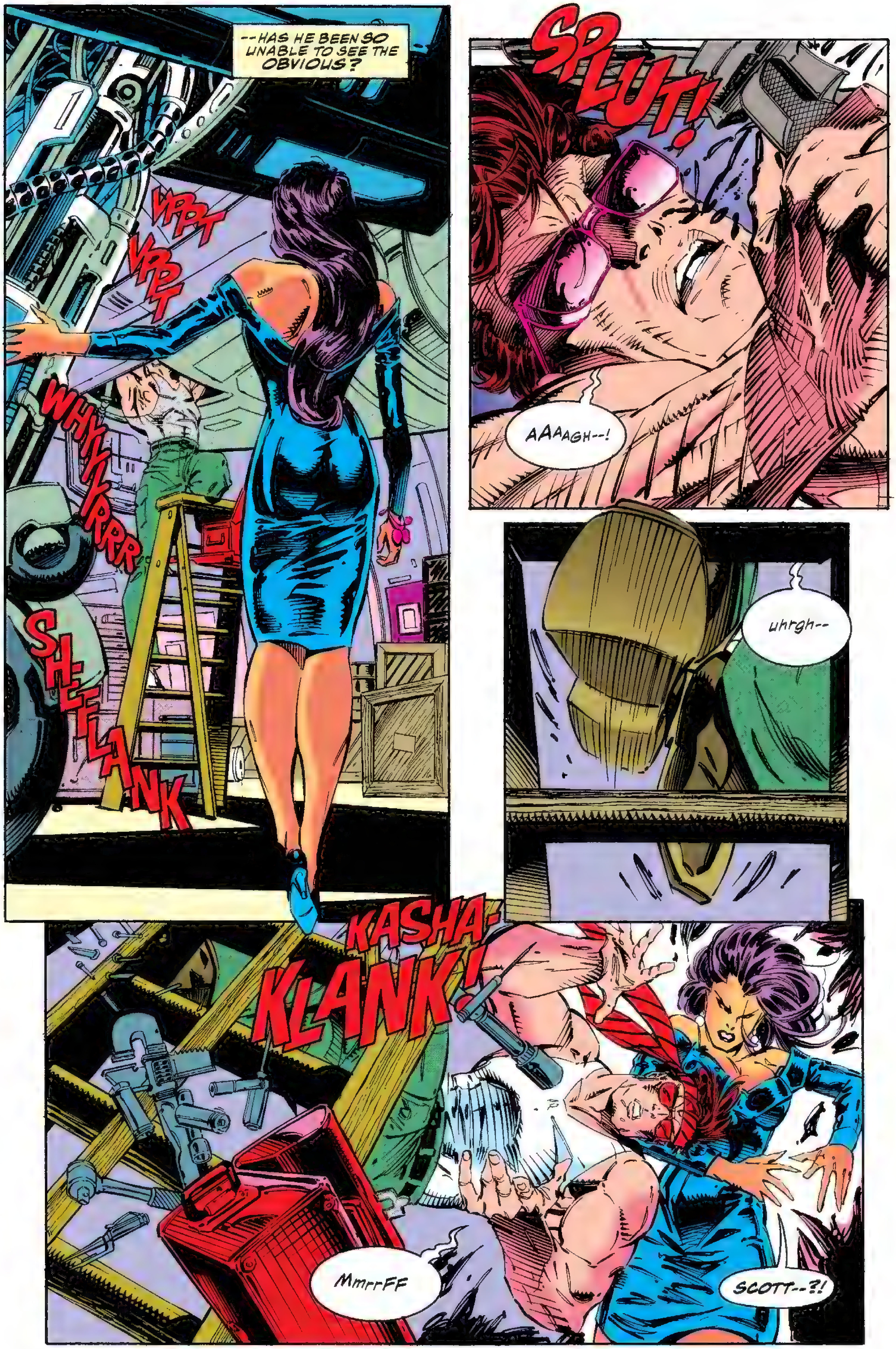

COMPUTER-- END RE-ENACTMENT PROGRAM.

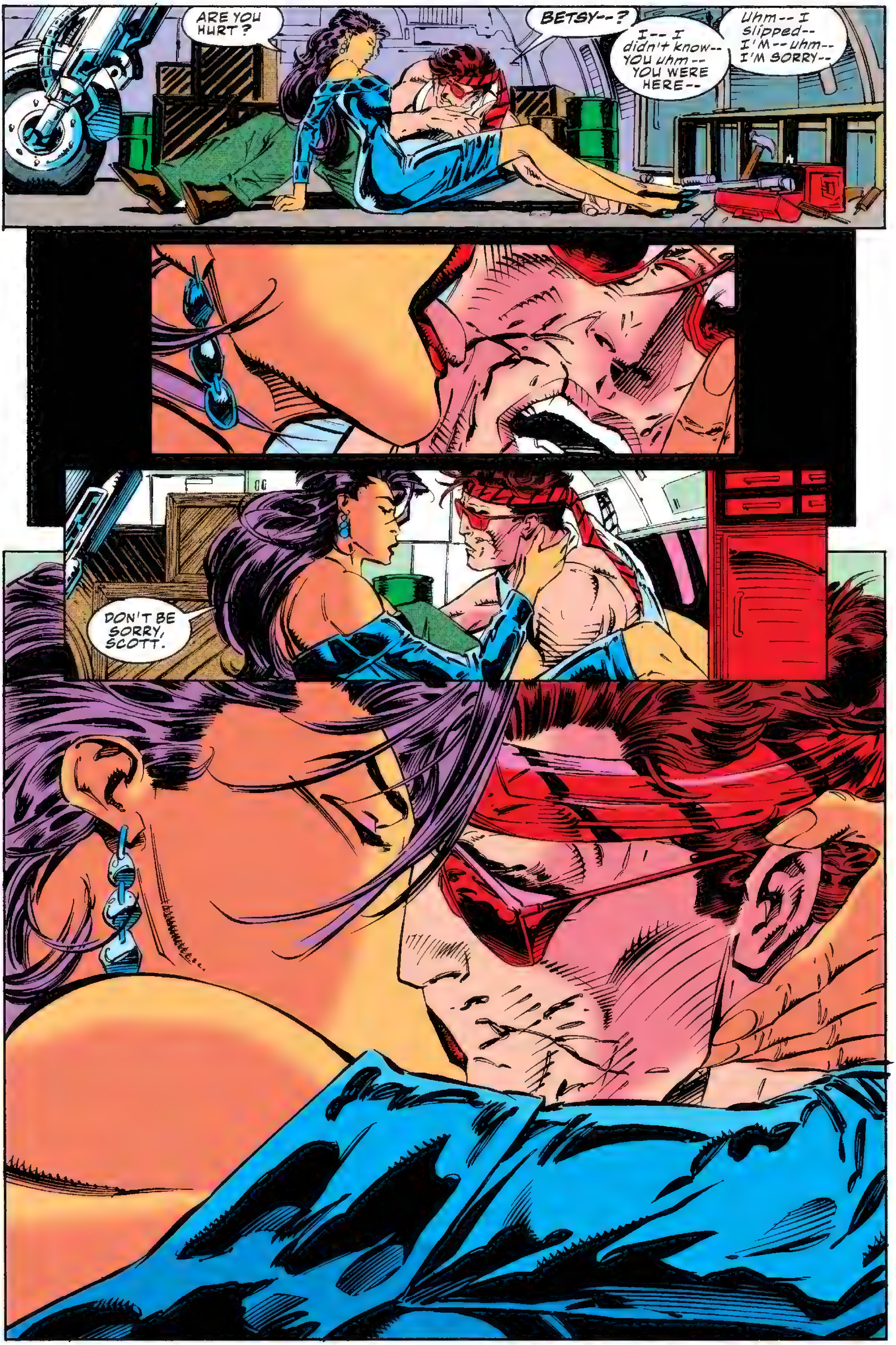
OMEGA RED ESCAPED. THE SOUL SKINNER WAS KILLED.
AND THE STATE SECURITY AGENTS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE SITUATION WILL SIMPLY SWEEP IT ALL UNDER THE RUG.
YOU SHOULD NOT BE SAYIN' THE WORD "RUG"...
DID YOU SAY SOMETHING, JUBILATION?
JUST CRACKED MY GUM.
AN ANNOYING HABIT.
SO'S HOOKIN' YOURSELF UP TO AN ALIEN DISHWASHER AN' SCRUBBIN' OUT THE INSIDES O' YER HEAD, BUT Y'DON'T HEAR ME COMPLAININ'...
WOULD YOU MIND TERRIBLY SPEAKING UP A BIT?
THIS EMPATHIC IMAGING HELMET IS NOT VERY CONDUCIVE TO CONVERSATION, IS IT?
DEPENDS ON WHAT YOU WANNA CONVERSE ABOUT.
VHRRRR
I SIMPLY WONDERED IF SEEING PETER AND ILLYANA LOSE THEIR PARENTS HAD ANY ADVERSE EFFECT ON YOU...
'CAUSE MY FOLKS GOT ACED ONCE, TOO? PIECE-A-CAKE--
--S'FAR AS I CAN TELL, LIFE IS NOTHIN' BUT LOSIN'.
JUST A MATTER OF LOSIN' AS LITTLE AS POSSIBLE...
...WHILE LIVIN' AS MUCH AS YOU CAN!
LET'S GO CHECK ON PETEY AND THE PIMPLE.

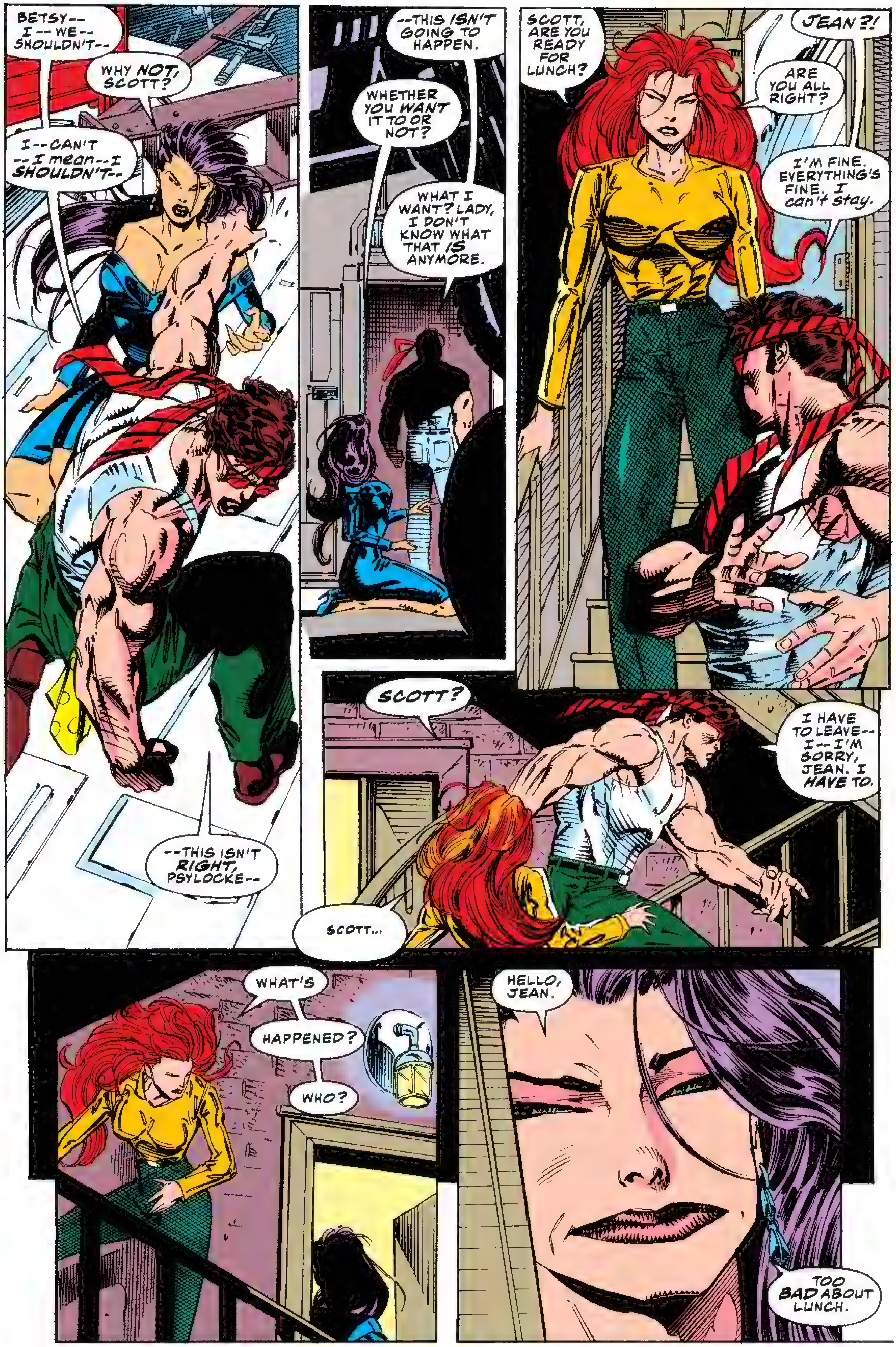

HE DOESN'T SAY ANYTHING. HE ALLOWS JUBILEE TO HIDE BEHIND HER FACADE OF INDIFFERENCE.
BUT XAVIER KNOWS BETTER. HE HAS SEEN THROUGH THE BRICK WALL SHE HAS ERECTED AROUND HERSELF--
--AS SHE HAS SEEN THROUGH HIS.
MAYBE THAT IS WHY THEY HAVE BONDED OF LATE. BECAUSE THEY HAVE SO MUCH PAIN IN COMMON.
BUT CAN'T THE SAME BE SAID FOR ALL HIS X-MEN?
EVER SINCE HE RETURNED FROM HIS SELF-IMPOSED EXILE IN SPACE, WHY HAS HE FELT SO-- DISTANT-- FROM THEM?
PERHAPS, BECAUSE HE FEARS GETTING TOO CLOSE, WOULD END UP HURTING TOO MUCH.
PETER, HOW IS ILLYANA?
SHE IS STILL FIGHTING THE RATHER NASTY FLU BUG SHE CONTRACTED WHEN WE ARRIVED, PROFESSOR.
IT HAS BEEN A FEW DAYS AT THAT -- HAS THE CHILD BEEN TESTED FOR STREP THROAT?
SHE'LL BE FINE, PROFESSOR. I WILL CARE FOR HER.
I WILL NOT ALLOW HER TO BE HURT AGAIN.


AND YOU, PETER? WHO WILL CARE FOR YOU?
HOW HAVE YOU BEEN HOLDING UP UNDER ALL THIS STRESS? YOUR PARENTS' DEATH MUST--
I AM DOING WHAT I HAVE ALWAYS-- WHAT WE HAVE ALWAYS DONE--
--I AM SURVIVING.
I am carrying on.
SHE AVOIDS HER PAIN. SHE RUNS FROM IT, THINKING HOW IRONIC THAT SHE WOUND UP IN A PLACE LIKE THIS--
WELL, ALL MY BEST TO THE PIMPLE, BUT I DON'T FEEL LIKE GETTIN' HER BUG.
HASTA LUMBAGOS.
--A HOUSE FILLED WITH AS MANY PEOPLE WHO ARE AS WOUNDED AS SHE IS.
WELL, SPEAK OF THE DEVIL.
GOOD AFTERNOON, CHILD.
PSYLOCKE!

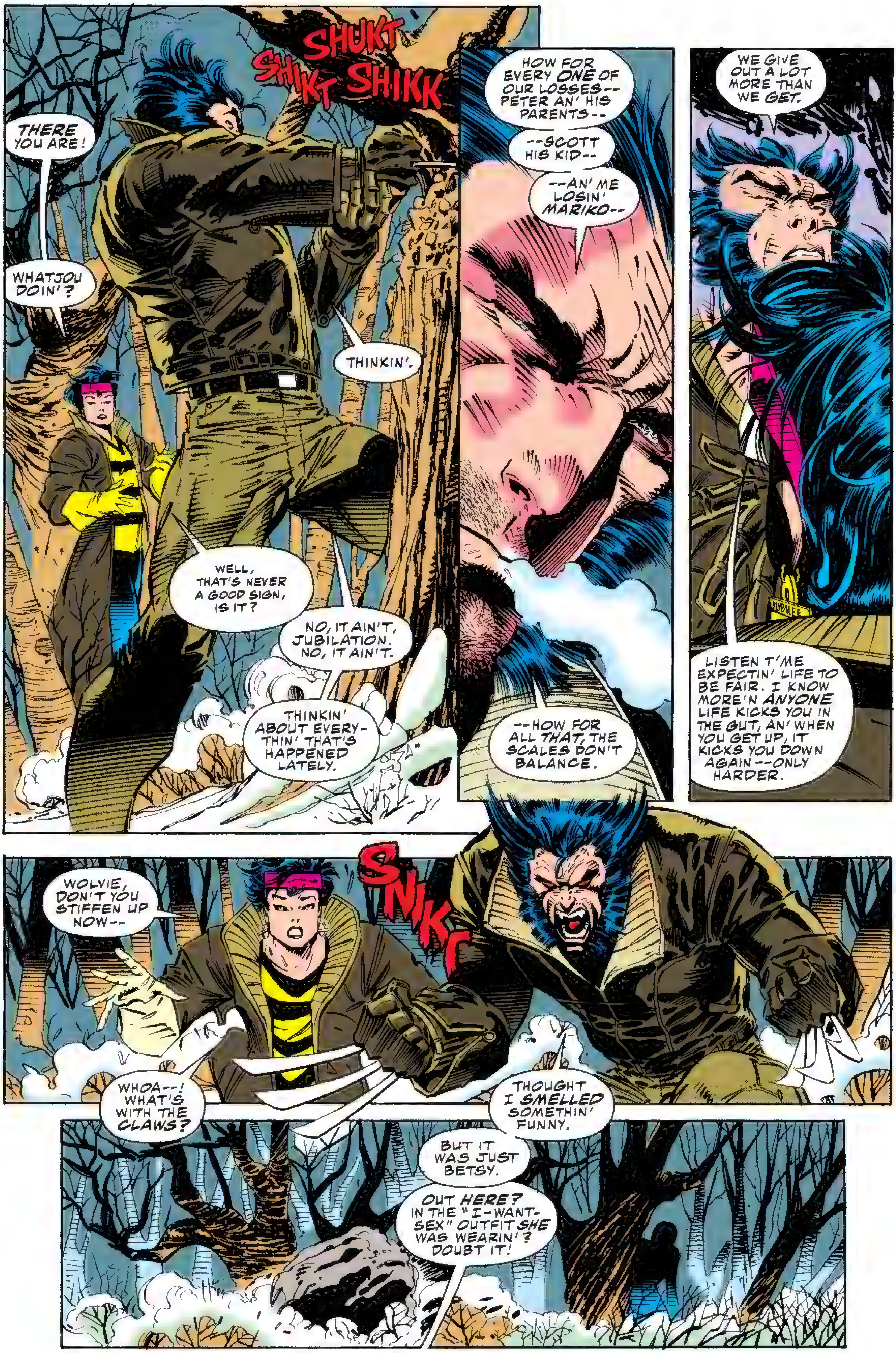

WHEN WE'RE NOT ON A MISSION, I'D TRULY PREFER YOU CALL ME MS. BRADDOCK. OR ELISABETH. OR, IF YOU MUST, BETSY.
HOWZABOUT I CALL YOU LATE FOR DINNER?
YOU SEEN WOLVEROONIE?
OUTSIDE. WALKING TOWARDS THE BOATHOUSE.
FIGURES! S' Fraggin twenty degrees out there!
HANGAR BAY
WHIRR
VRRT
VRRT
WHIRR
SCOTT SUMMERS. CYCLOPS. FIELD LEADER OF THE X-MEN.
CURSED WITH OPTIC BLASTS WHICH PREVENT HIM FROM OPENING HIS EYES WITHOUT PROTECTIVE RUBY QUARTZ GLASSES.
BUT THAT DOESN'T MEAN SCOTT SUMMERS IS BLIND.
WHY THEN, FOR MONTHS NOW--

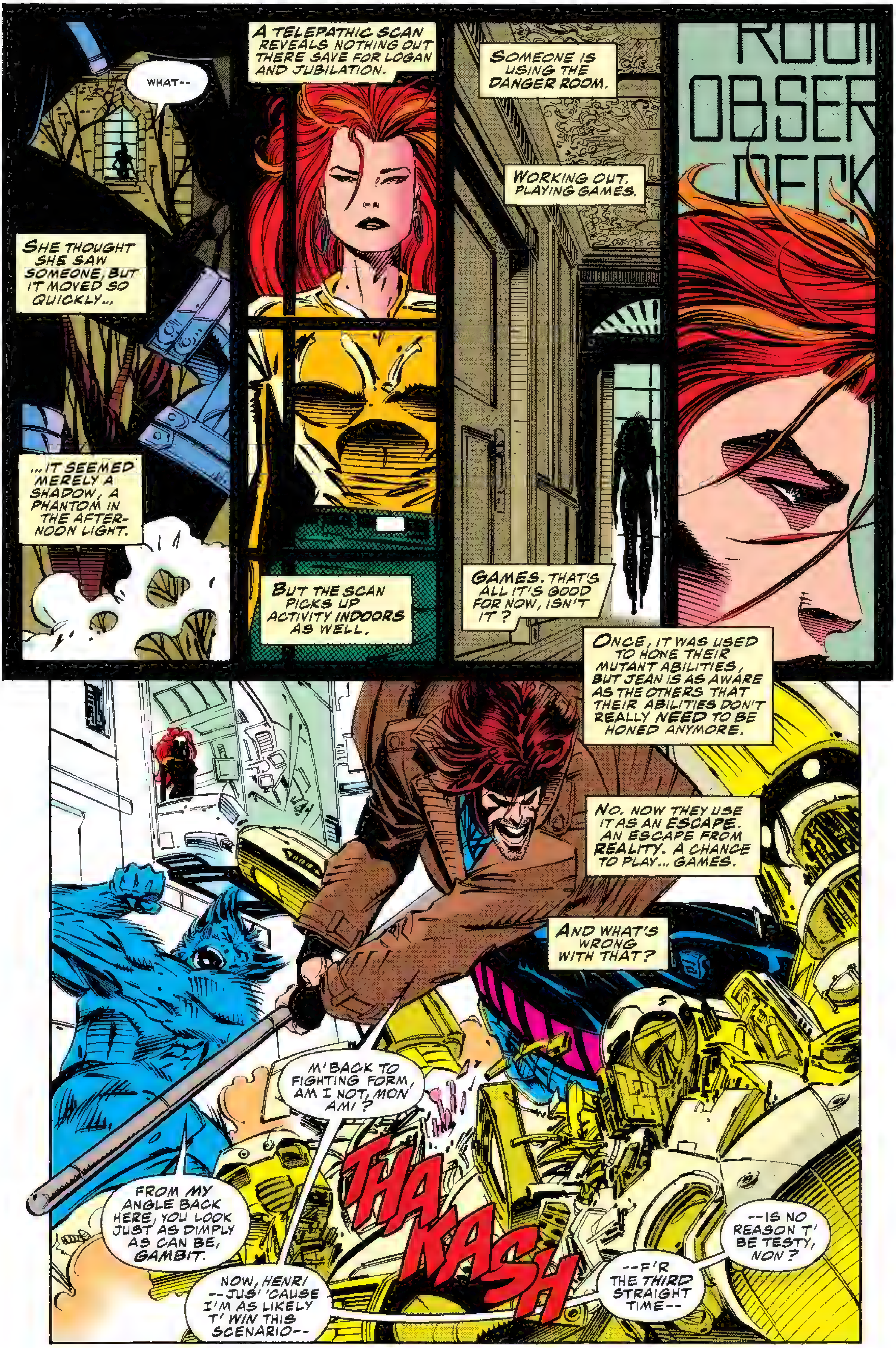

--HAS HE BEEN SO UNABLE TO SEE THE OBVIOUS?
VRPT
VRPT
WHYYYRRR
SHEFFLANK
SPLUT!
AAAAGH--!
uhrgh--
KASHA-KLANK!
MmrrFF
SCOTT--?!

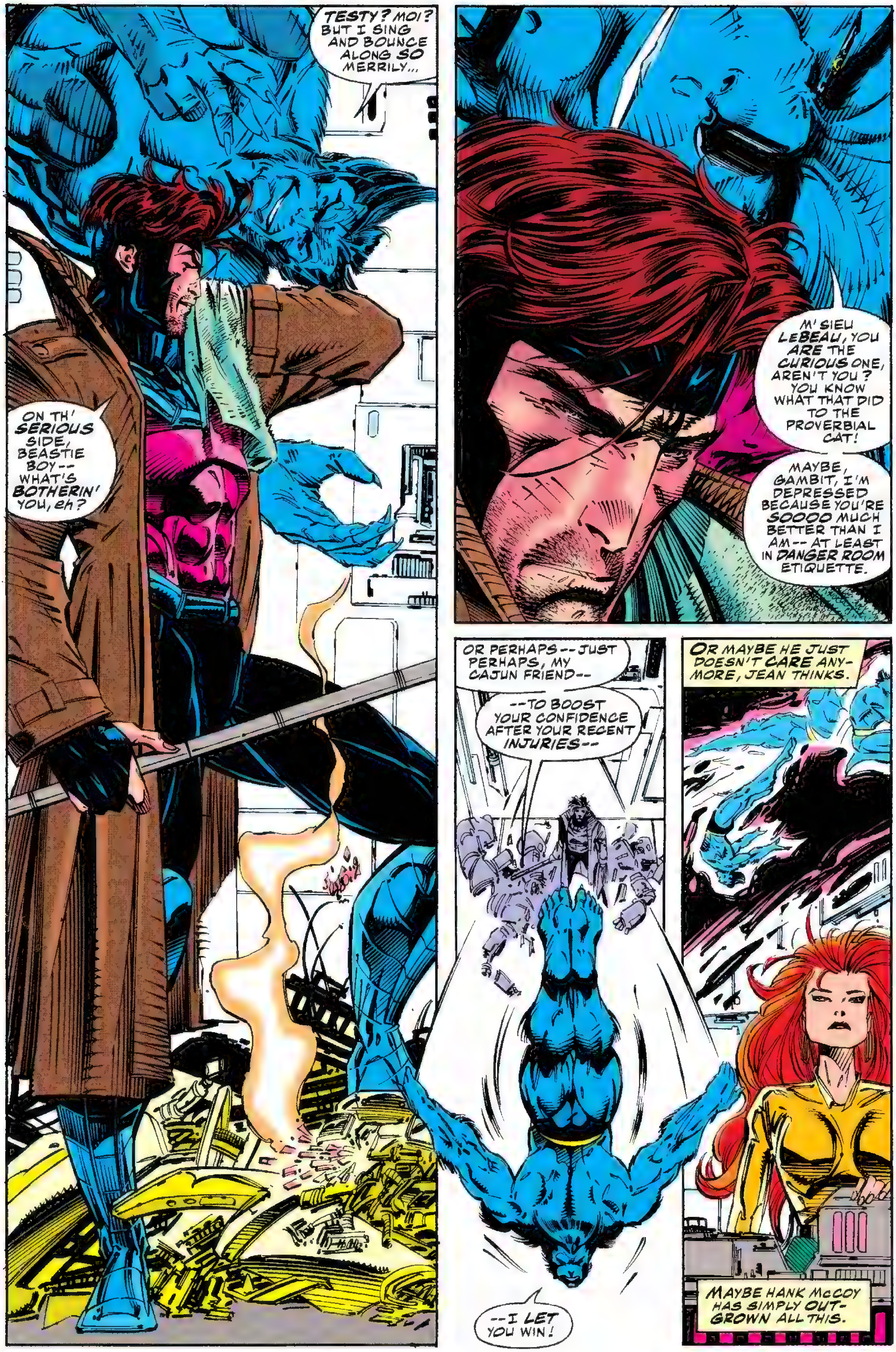

ARE YOU HURT?
BETSY--?
I-- I didn't know-- YOU uhm-- YOU WERE HERE--
Uhm-- I slipped-- I'M--uhm-- I'M SORRY--
DON'T BE SORRY, SCOTT.


BETSY-- I -- WE-- SHOULDN'T--
WHY NOT, SCOTT?
I--CAN'T --I mean--I SHOULDN'T--
--THIS ISN'T RIGHT, PSYLOCKE--
--THIS ISN'T GOING TO HAPPEN.
WHETHER YOU WANT IT TO OR NOT?
WHAT I WANT? LADY, I DON'T KNOW WHAT THAT IS ANYMORE.
SCOTT, ARE YOU READY FOR LUNCH?
JEAN?!
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
I'M FINE. EVERYTHING'S FINE. I can't stay.
SCOTT?
I HAVE TO LEAVE-- I--I'M SORRY, JEAN. I HAVE TO.
SCOTT...
WHAT'S
HAPPENED?
WHO?
HELLO, JEAN.
TOO BAD ABOUT LUNCH.

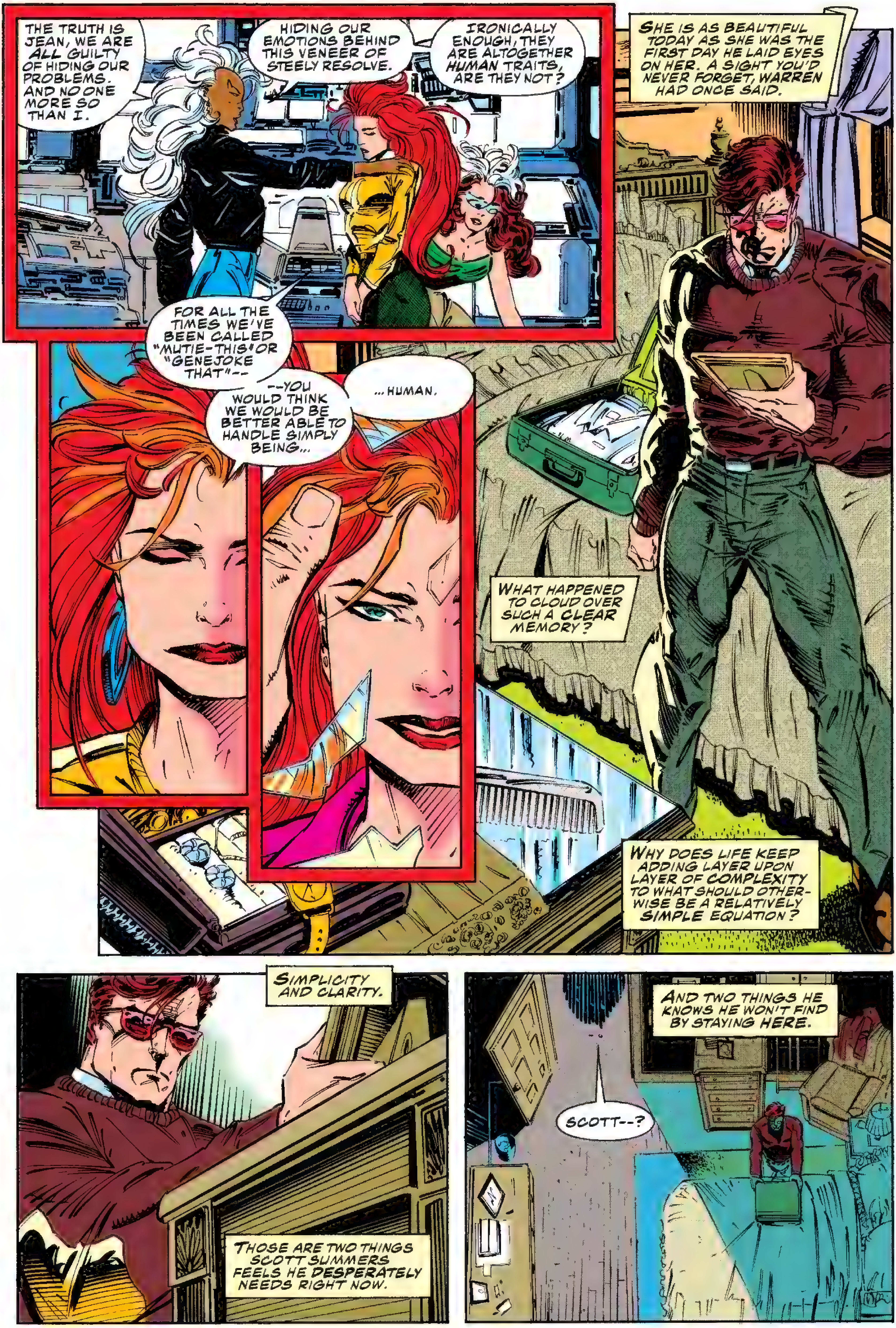
IN HER LIFE, JEAN GREY HAS FOUGHT MANY BATTLES, BEEN TO THE FAR PLACES OF THE GALAXY AND STARED DEATH IN THE FACE MORE OFTEN THAN SHE CAN REMEMBER...
... AND YET, TODAY SHE RUNS FROM THE COLD STARE OF A FELLOW X-MAN LIKE A FRIGHTENED CHILD.
BECAUSE SUDDENLY SHE KNOWS... KNOWS WITH A STUNNING CERTAINTY THAT THE THOUGHTS, LOVES AND DRIVES OF THE MAN SHE LOVES ARE SUDDENLY UNKNOWN TO HER.
BUT SHOULD SHE BE SURPRISED?
HASN'T IT ALWAYS BEEN A STRUGGLE FOR THE TWO OF THEM?
HAVEN'T THEY ALWAYS BEEN FORCED TO CHIP AWAY AT THE EMOTIONAL BARRIERS THAT LIFE AS MUTANTS, AS X-MEN, HAS BUILT AROUND THEM?
MAYBE IT'S JUST THAT HER ARMS ARE WEARY. THE CHISEL WORN. THE HAMMER LOST ITS BITE.
OR MAYBE... JUST MAYBE... BEYOND THE STRUGGLE AND THE BARRIERS, SHE AND SCOTT HAVE LEFT... VERY LITTLE.
DOES LIVING IN THIS HOUSE-- BEING AN X-MAN --MEAN THAT YOUTH AND INNOCENCE HAVE TO BE LEFT BEHIND?
AND CAN SHE REALLY BLAME HIM? WHAT HAS SHE REALLY BEEN TO HIM OF LATE? FRIEND? COMPANION? LOVER? OR MERELY TEAM-MATE? X-MAN?
WHY DOES SHE FEEL SO MUCH OLDER THAN SHE REALLY IS?
WHY HAS TIME TAKEN AWAY ALL THEIR SPARK? ALL THEIR ENERGY?
WOLLLVERIIINE--?!
MAJOR NOOGIES, DUDE-- YER MAKIN' ME 'BLADE ON COBBLE-STONES!

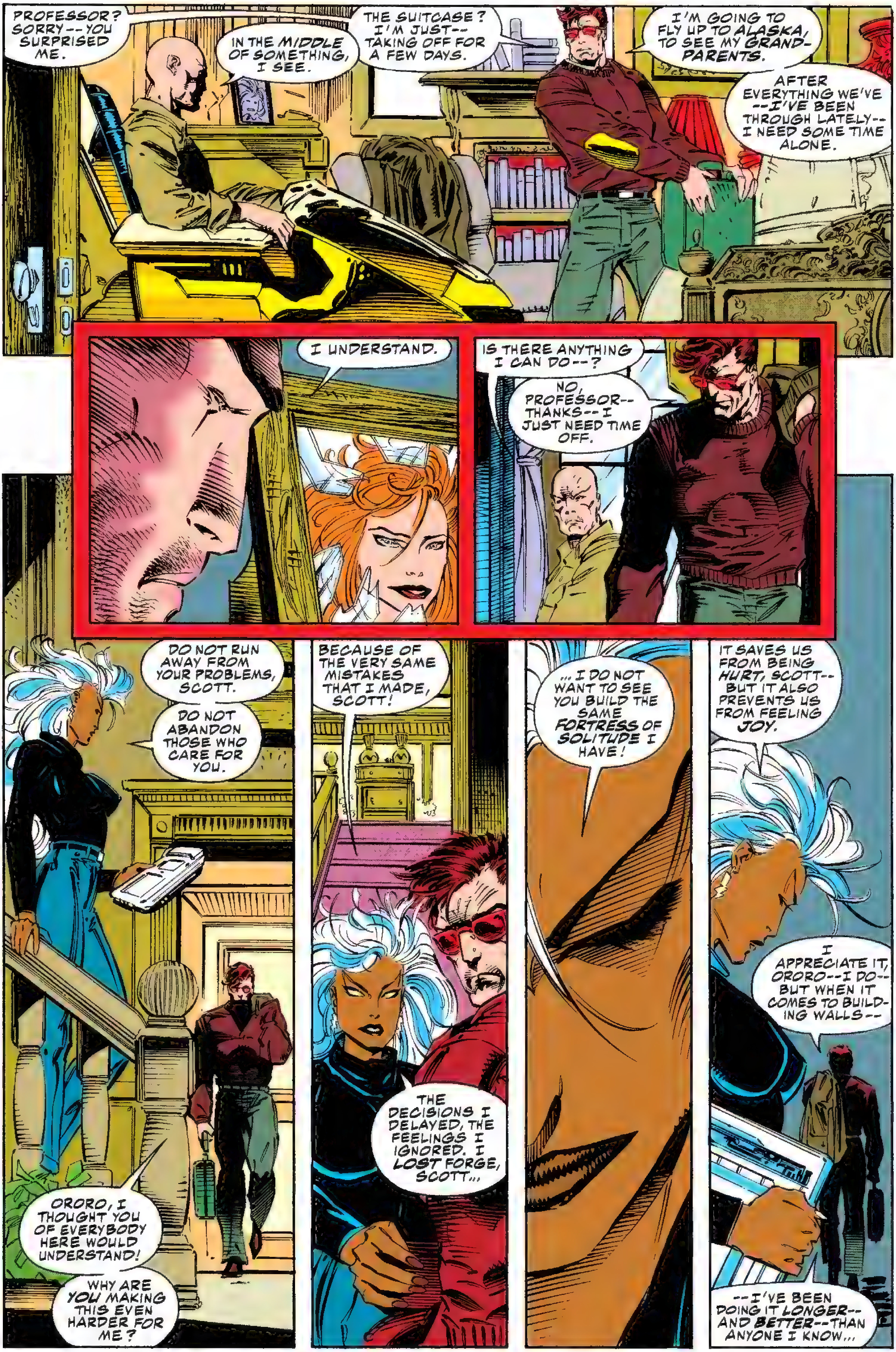

SHUKT SHIKT SHIKK
THERE YOU ARE!
WHATJOU DOIN'?
THINKIN'.
WELL, THAT'S NEVER A GOOD SIGN, IS IT?
NO, IT AIN'T, JUBILATION. NO, IT AIN'T.
THINKIN' ABOUT EVERYTHIN' THAT'S HAPPENED LATELY.
HOW FOR EVERY *ONE* OF OUR LOSSES-- PETER AN' HIS PARENTS--
--SCOTT HIS KID--
--AN' ME LOSIN' *MARIKO*--
--HOW FOR ALL *THAT*, THE SCALES DON'T BALANCE.
WE GIVE OUT A LOT MORE THAN WE *GET*.
LISTEN T'ME EXPECTIN' LIFE TO BE FAIR. I KNOW MORE'N *ANYONE* LIFE KICKS YOU IN THE GUT, AN' WHEN YOU GET UP, IT KICKS YOU DOWN AGAIN --ONLY HARDER.
SNIKT
WOLVIE, DON'T YOU STIFFEN UP NOW--
WHOA--! WHAT'S WITH THE *CLAWS*?
THOUGHT I *SMELLED* SOMETHIN' FUNNY.
BUT IT WAS JUST BETSY.
OUT *HERE*? IN THE "I-WANT-SEX" OUTFIT *SHE* WAS WEARIN'? DOUBT IT!

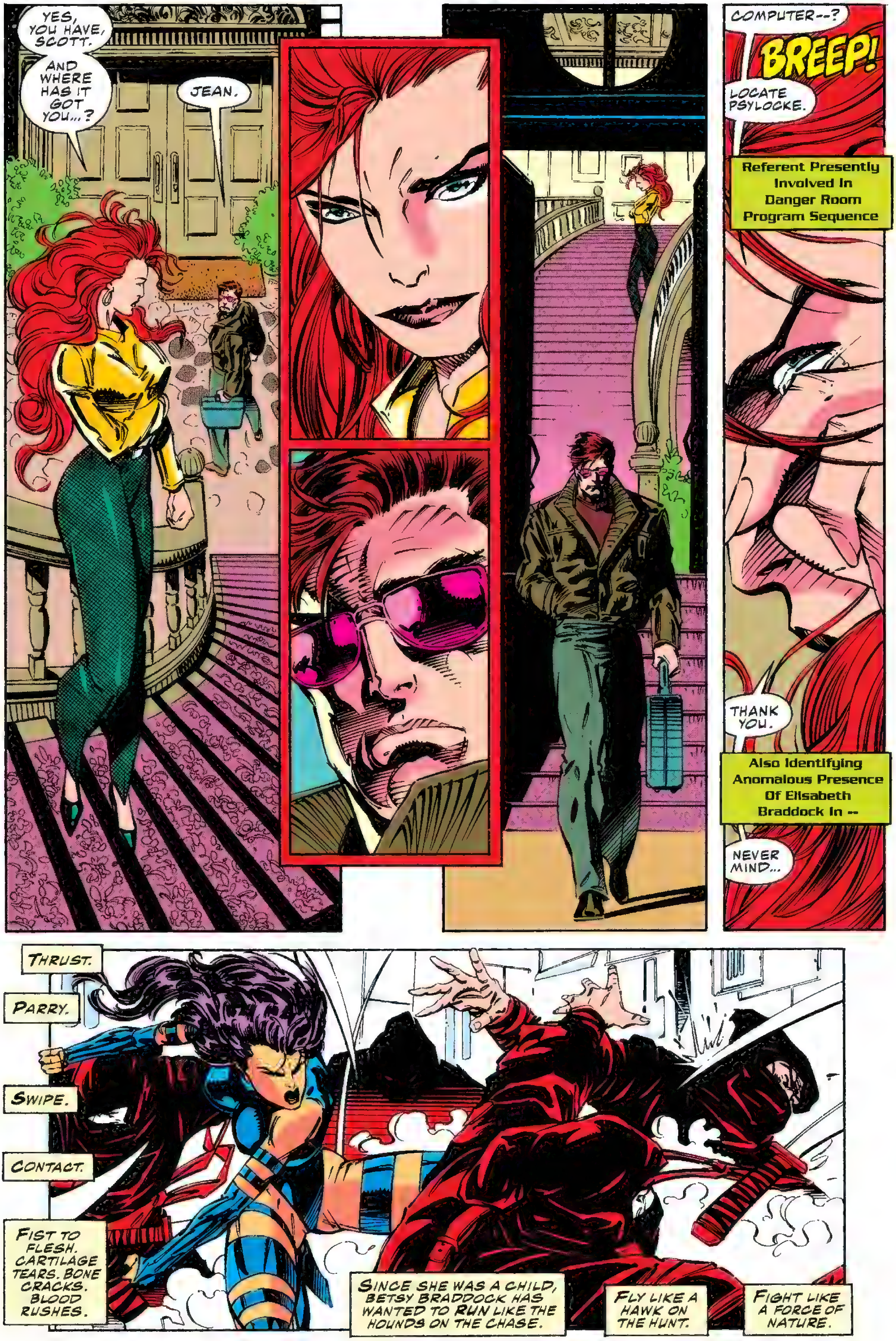

WHAT--
SHE THOUGHT SHE SAW SOMEONE, BUT IT MOVED SO QUICKLY...
...IT SEEMED MERELY A SHADOW, A PHANTOM IN THE AFTERNOON LIGHT.
A TELEPATHIC SCAN REVEALS NOTHING OUT THERE SAVE FOR LOGAN AND JUBILATION.
BUT THE SCAN PICKS UP ACTIVITY INDOORS AS WELL.
SOMEONE IS USING THE DANGER ROOM.
WORKING OUT. PLAYING GAMES.
GAMES. THAT'S ALL IT'S GOOD FOR NOW, ISN'T IT?
ROO
OBSER
DECK
ONCE, IT WAS USED TO HONE THEIR MUTANT ABILITIES, BUT JEAN IS AS AWARE AS THE OTHERS THAT THEIR ABILITIES DON'T REALLY NEED TO BE HONED ANYMORE.
NO. NOW THEY USE IT AS AN ESCAPE. AN ESCAPE FROM REALITY. A CHANCE TO PLAY... GAMES.
AND WHAT'S WRONG WITH THAT?
M' BACK TO FIGHTING FORM, AM I NOT, MON AMI?
FROM MY ANGLE BACK HERE, YOU LOOK JUST AS DIMPLY AS CAN BE, GAMBIT.
NOW, HENRI --JUS' 'CAUSE I'M AS LIKELY T' WIN THIS SCENARIO--
THA KASH
--F'R THE THIRD STRAIGHT TIME--
--IS NO REASON T' BE TESTY, NON?

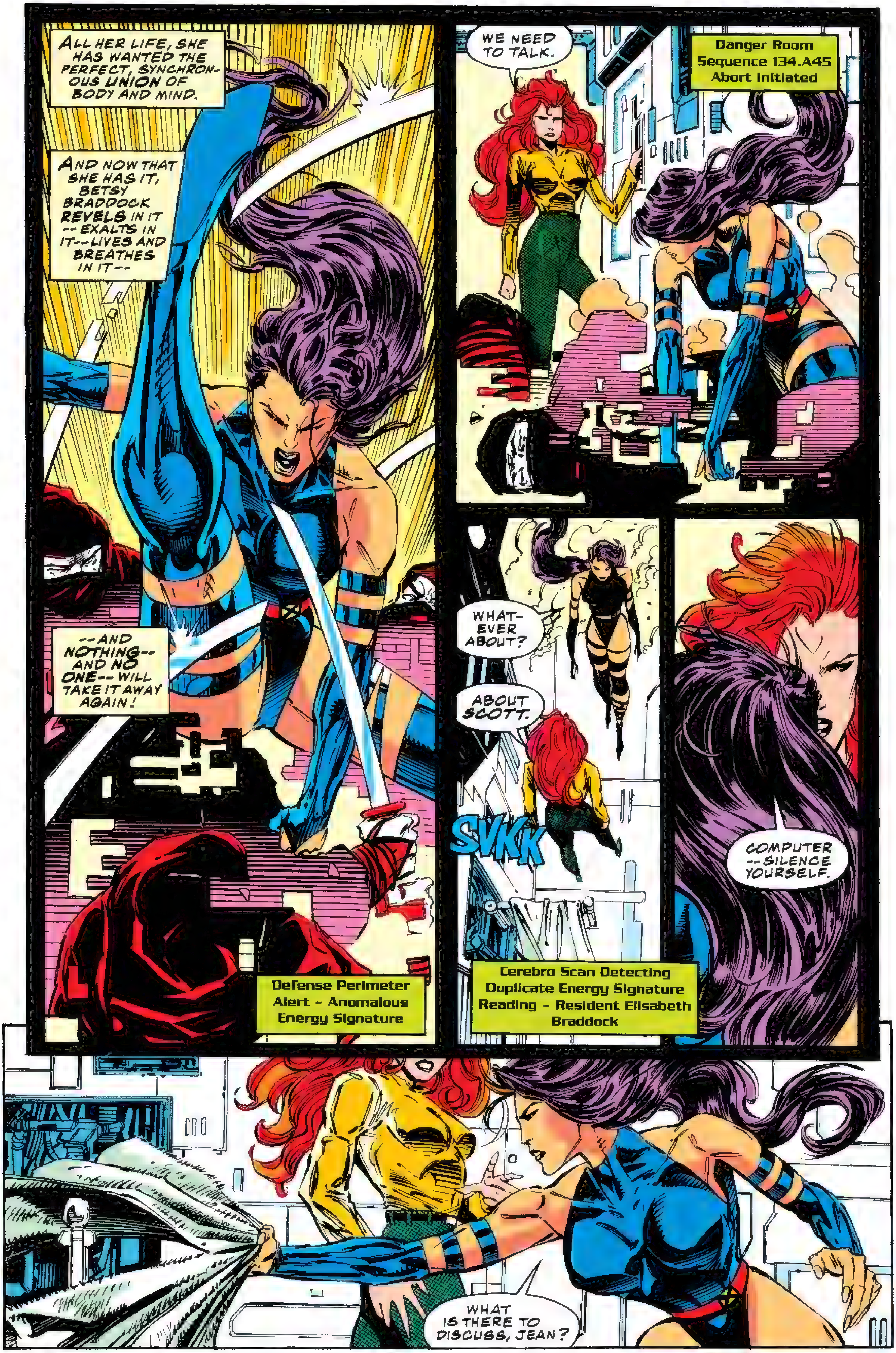

TESTY? MOI? BUT I SING AND BOUNCE ALONG SO MERRILY...
ON TH' SERIOUS SIDE, BEASTIE BOY-- WHAT'S BOTHERIN' YOU, eh?
M'SIEU LEBEAU, YOU ARE THE CURIOUS ONE, AREN'T YOU? YOU KNOW WHAT THAT DID TO THE PROVERBIAL CAT!
MAYBE, GAMBIT, I'M DEPRESSED BECAUSE YOU'RE SOOOO MUCH BETTER THAN I AM-- AT LEAST IN DANGER ROOM ETIQUETTE.
OR PERHAPS--JUST PERHAPS, MY CAJUN FRIEND--
--TO BOOST YOUR CONFIDENCE AFTER YOUR RECENT INJURIES--
--I LET YOU WIN!
OR MAYBE HE JUST DOESN'T CARE ANYMORE, JEAN THINKS.
MAYBE HANK McCOY HAS SIMPLY OUTGROWN ALL THIS.

MAYBE HE'S WONDERING IF IT ISN'T TIME TO MOVE ON?
GET ON WITH HIS LIFE.
VRBEEP
SEE THINGS WITH NEW EYES.
JEAN. I WAS FINISHING UP THE LAST OF HENRY'S DIAGNOSTIC SCANS ON *ROGUE'S* RETINAL DAMAGE.
AND HOW IS SHE, *ORORO?*
IT APPEARS HER OPTIC NERVES SUSTAINED NO *PERMANENT* DAMAGE.
I CONFESS I AM NO EXPERT, BUT EXCEPT FOR A RESIDUAL SENSITIVITY TO LIGHT, SHE SHOULD BE FINE.
IT'S ABOUT TIME! AH'M A LITTLE TIRED'A PUTTIN' MY *TRUST* IN PEOPLE T' TELL ME WHERE MY NEXT STEP IS GOIN' T' LAND!
I TAKE IT *GAMBIT* HASN'T BEEN THE IDEAL SET OF EYES?
YOU *KIDDIN'* ME, GIRL? THAT BOY SEES WHERE *HE* WANTS T'GO CLEAR ENOUGH.
AH JUST DON'T KNOW IF IT'S THE SAME DIRECTION *AH* WANT.
YOU DON'T KNOW IF YOU TRUST HIM, DO YOU?
FUNNY. WE PUT OUR *LIVES* IN EACH OTHERS' HANDS--BUT OUR *HEARTS?* THAT'S ANOTHER MATTER.


THE TRUTH IS JEAN, WE ARE ALL GUILTY OF HIDING OUR PROBLEMS. AND NO ONE MORE SO THAN I.
HIDING OUR EMOTIONS BEHIND THIS VENEER OF STEELY RESOLVE.
IRONICALLY ENOUGH, THEY ARE ALTOGETHER HUMAN TRAITS, ARE THEY NOT?
SHE IS AS BEAUTIFUL TODAY AS SHE WAS THE FIRST DAY HE LAID EYES ON HER. A SIGHT YOU'D NEVER FORGET, WARREN HAD ONCE SAID.
FOR ALL THE TIMES WE'VE BEEN CALLED "MUTIE-THIS" OR "GENEJOKE THAT"--
--YOU WOULD THINK WE WOULD BE BETTER ABLE TO HANDLE SIMPLY BEING...
...HUMAN.
WHAT HAPPENED TO CLOUD OVER SUCH A CLEAR MEMORY?
WHY DOES LIFE KEEP ADDING LAYER UPON LAYER OF COMPLEXITY TO WHAT SHOULD OTHERWISE BE A RELATIVELY SIMPLE EQUATION?
SIMPLICITY AND CLARITY.
THOSE ARE TWO THINGS SCOTT SUMMERS FEELS HE DESPERATELY NEEDS RIGHT NOW.
AND TWO THINGS HE KNOWS HE WON'T FIND BY STAYING HERE.
SCOTT--?


PROFESSOR? SORRY--YOU SURPRISED ME.
IN THE *MIDDLE* OF SOMETHING, I SEE.
THE SUITCASE? I'M JUST--TAKING OFF FOR A FEW DAYS.
I'M GOING TO FLY UP TO *ALASKA*, TO SEE MY *GRAND-PARENTS*.
AFTER EVERYTHING WE'VE --*I'VE* BEEN THROUGH LATELY-- I NEED SOME TIME ALONE.
I UNDERSTAND.
IS THERE ANYTHING I CAN DO--?
NO, PROFESSOR--THANKS--I JUST NEED TIME OFF.
DO NOT RUN AWAY FROM YOUR PROBLEMS, SCOTT.
DO NOT ABANDON THOSE WHO CARE FOR YOU.
ORORO, I THOUGHT YOU OF EVERYBODY HERE WOULD UNDERSTAND!
WHY ARE *YOU* MAKING THIS EVEN HARDER FOR ME?
BECAUSE OF THE VERY SAME MISTAKES THAT I MADE, SCOTT!
THE DECISIONS I DELAYED, THE FEELINGS I IGNORED. I *LOST* FORGE, SCOTT...
...I DO NOT WANT TO SEE YOU BUILD THE SAME *FORTRESS OF SOLITUDE* I HAVE!
IT SAVES US FROM BEING *HURT*, SCOTT--BUT IT ALSO PREVENTS US FROM FEELING *JOY*.
I APPRECIATE IT, ORORO--I DO--BUT WHEN IT COMES TO BUILDING WALLS--
--I'VE BEEN DOING IT *LONGER*--AND *BETTER*--THAN ANYONE I KNOW...


YES, YOU HAVE, SCOTT.
AND WHERE HAS IT GOT YOU...?
JEAN.
COMPUTER--?
BREEP!
LOCATE PSYLOCKE.
Referent Presently Involved In Danger Room Program Sequence
THANK YOU.
Also Identifying Anomalous Presence Of Elisabeth Braddock In --
NEVER MIND...
THRUST.
PARRY.
SWIPE.
CONTACT.
FIST TO FLESH. CARTILAGE TEARS. BONE CRACKS. BLOOD RUSHES.
SINCE SHE WAS A CHILD, BETSY BRADDOCK HAS WANTED TO RUN LIKE THE HOUNDS ON THE CHASE.
FLY LIKE A HAWK ON THE HUNT.
FIGHT LIKE A FORCE OF NATURE.

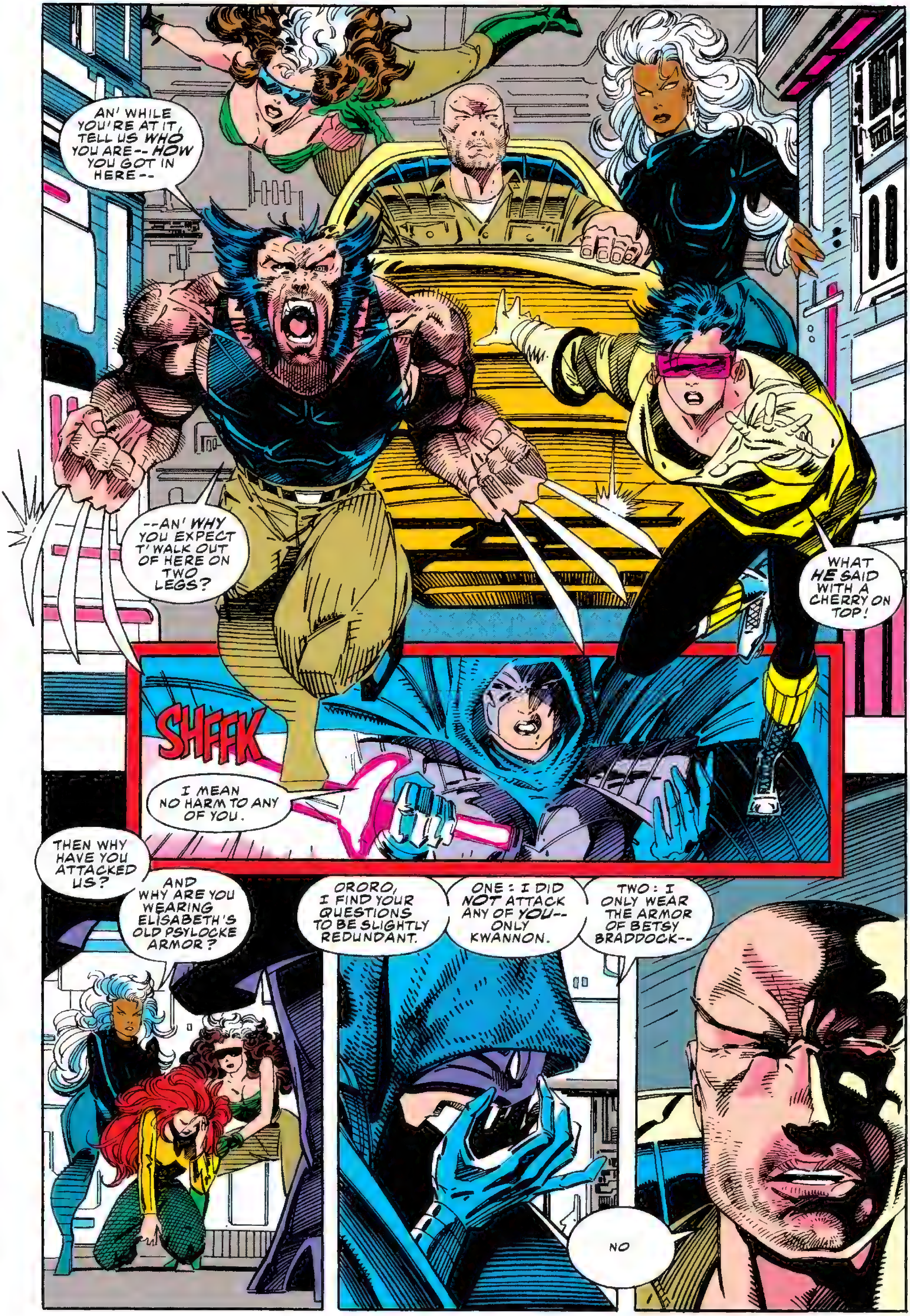

ALL HER LIFE, SHE HAS WANTED THE PERFECT, SYNCHRONOUS UNION OF BODY AND MIND.
AND NOW THAT SHE HAS IT, BETSY BRADDOCK REVELS IN IT -- EXALTS IN IT -- LIVES AND BREATHES IN IT --
-- AND NOTHING -- AND NO ONE -- WILL TAKE IT AWAY AGAIN!
Defense Perimeter Alert ~ Anomalous Energy Signature
WE NEED TO TALK.
Danger Room Sequence 134.A45 Abort Initiated
WHATEVER ABOUT?
ABOUT SCOTT.
SVKK
Cerebro Scan Detecting Duplicate Energy Signature Reading ~ Resident Elisabeth Braddock
COMPUTER -- SILENCE YOURSELF.
WHAT IS THERE TO DISCUSS, JEAN?

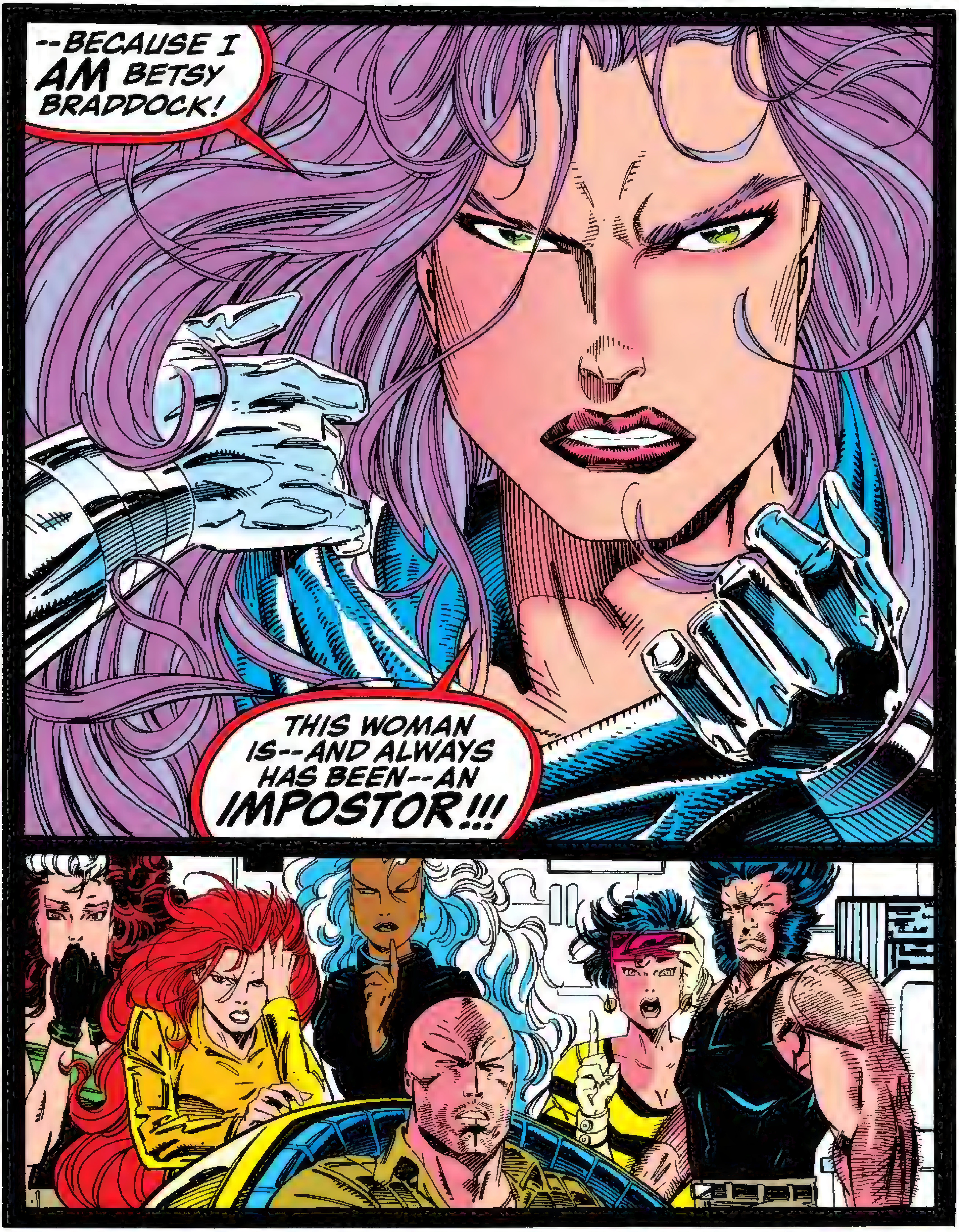
ARE YOU AND SCOTT--HAVING AN--*AFFAIR?*
OH. MY.
NO.
AN AFFAIR.
NO, JEAN. NOT AN AFFAIR.
I WANT HIM TO RUN HIS FINGERS THROUGH MY HAIR.
I WANT TO FEEL HIS BACK TENSE BENEATH MY FINGER-TIPS.
I WANT TO SEE HIM *SMILE* ... FOR A *CHANGE*...
... BUT NO. SCOTT AND I ARE *NOT* HAVING "AN AFFAIR."
THEN... HAVE YOU TELEPATHICALLY *MANIPULATED* HIS MIND?
DON'T TURN YOUR BACK ON ME, BETSY!
ANSWER ME!
WHY DON'T YOU JUST SEE FOR *YOURSELF?*
SHFYEEAK
awourg
BETSY BRADDOCK CALLS IT A *PSYCHIC BLADE*. IT IS THE PHYSICAL TOTALITY OF HER TELEPATHIC POWERS.

CAUGHT UNPREPARED, IT CUTS THROUGH JEAN GREY'S DEFENSES, SURGING IN A CONVULSING SPASM THROUGH HER SPINAL COLUMN.
AND AS CONSCIOUSNESS FADES, JEAN SEES THE TRUTH-- SHE UNDERSTANDS BETSY'S MOTIVES AND ACTIONS--
--BUT THE KNOWLEDGE DISSIPATES AS DARKNESS ENVELOPES HER.
NOW YOU KNOW, JEAN.
YOU WILL NOT REMEMBER, BUT YOU DO KNOW.
AS DO I...
OH, JEAN! WHAT A SIMPLY MARVELOUS ENDGAME.
PROGRAMMING A HOLOGRAM SEQUENCE OF MY EARLIER SELF--
--FORCING ME TO QUESTION WHAT I AM NOW IN FULL VIEW OF WHAT I ONCE WAS.
I WOULDN'T HAVE THOUGHT YOU CAPABLE OF SUCH A DUPLICITOUS MANEUVER.

AND YOU WOULD HAVE THOUGHT RIGHT, KWANNON-- CONSIDERING SHE IS NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR MY PRESENCE HERE--
SHFYEEKCH
AND WHAT DID YOU CALL ME--
--WHO ARE YOU?
--YOU ARE!
YOU CREATED A PSYCHIC KATANA BLADE?
I AM THE ONE THING YOU HAVE FEARED MOST SINCE FIRST AWAKENING TO SEE THE WORLD THROUGH NEW EYES--

awourg
CHAKKCH
--I AM THE TRUTH!!!
SHE FEELS A HARD, HACKING SHOVEL DIG INTO HER MIND, A FEELING THAT IS BOTH, INCREDIBLY, EQUAL PARTS PAIN AND PLEASURE--
AND SUDDENLY, BETSY BRADDOCK NO LONGER FIGHTS LIKE A FORCE OF NATURE.
--AND SHE KNOWS INSTINCTIVELY THIS IS WHAT IT FEELS LIKE WHEN SHE USES HER MUTANT POWER AGAINST ANOTHER--
--AND YES, IT HURTS--
--BUT SHE FALLS WITH A SLIGHT SMILE-- TAKING PLEASURE IN REALIZING HOW MUCH PAIN SHE HAS INFLICTED ON OTHERS--
--AND HOW SUPERIOR SHE HAS BEEN TO HER OPPONENTS IN BOTH BODY AND MIND...
WHAT IS GOING ON HERE?


AN' WHILE YOU'RE AT IT, TELL US *WHO* YOU ARE-- *HOW* YOU GOT IN HERE--
--AN' *WHY* YOU EXPECT T' WALK OUT OF HERE ON TWO LEGS?
WHAT *HE* SAID WITH A CHERRY ON TOP!
SHFFK
I MEAN NO HARM TO ANY OF YOU.
THEN WHY HAVE YOU ATTACKED US?
AND WHY ARE YOU WEARING ELISABETH'S OLD PSYLOCKE ARMOR?
ORORO, I FIND YOUR QUESTIONS TO BE SLIGHTLY REDUNDANT.
ONE: I DID *NOT* ATTACK ANY OF *YOU*-- ONLY KWANNON.
TWO: I ONLY WEAR THE ARMOR OF BETSY BRADDOCK--
NO


--BECAUSE I AM BETSY BRADDOCK!
THIS WOMAN IS--AND ALWAYS HAS BEEN--AN IMPOSTOR!!!

PSYLOCKE, REVANCHE, BETSY BRADDOCK AND KWANNON--

"WHO'S BEEN SLEEPING IN MY HEAD?"

MARVEL COMICS
X-MEN
featuring GAMBIT! PSYLOCKE! REVANCHE!
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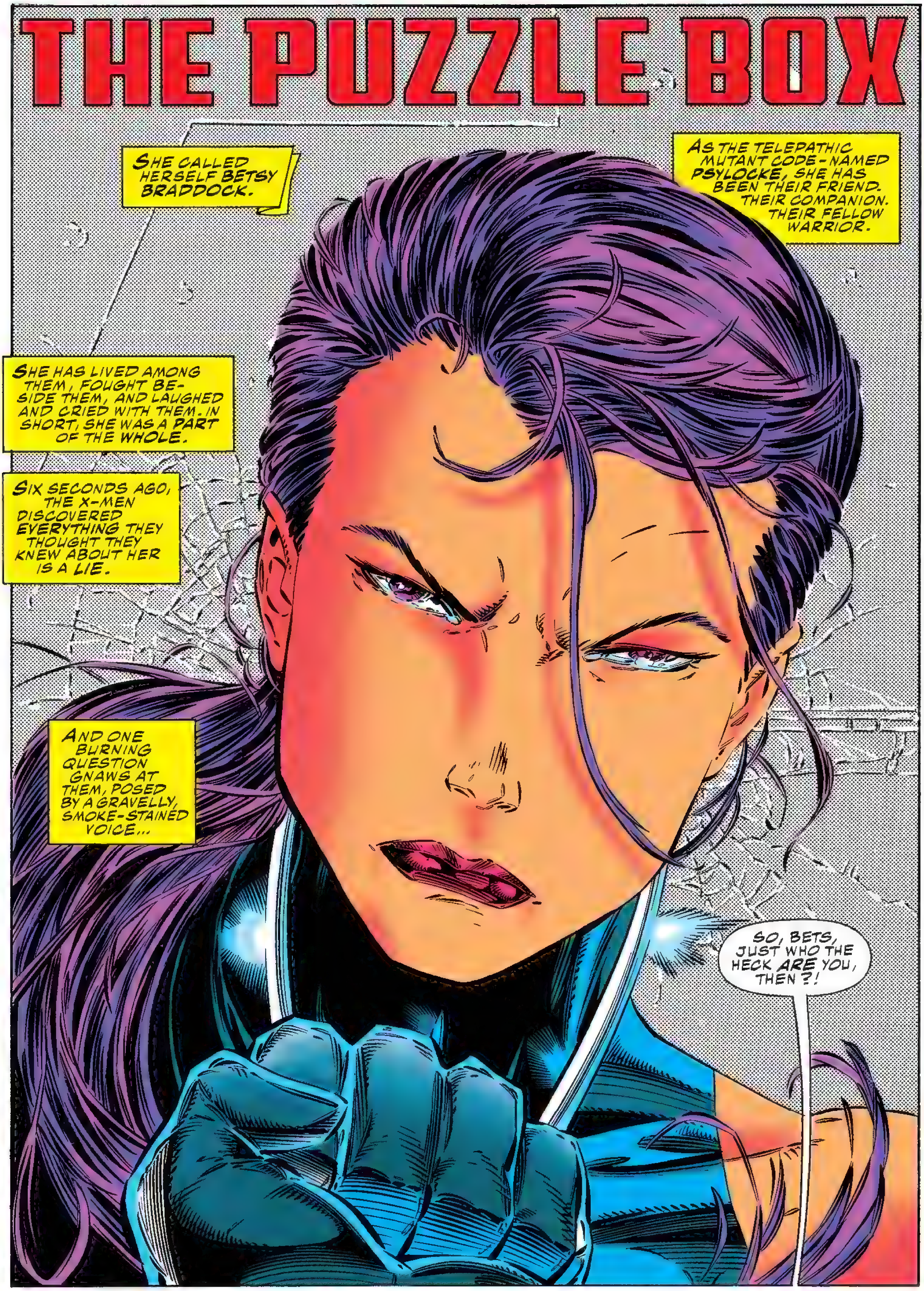
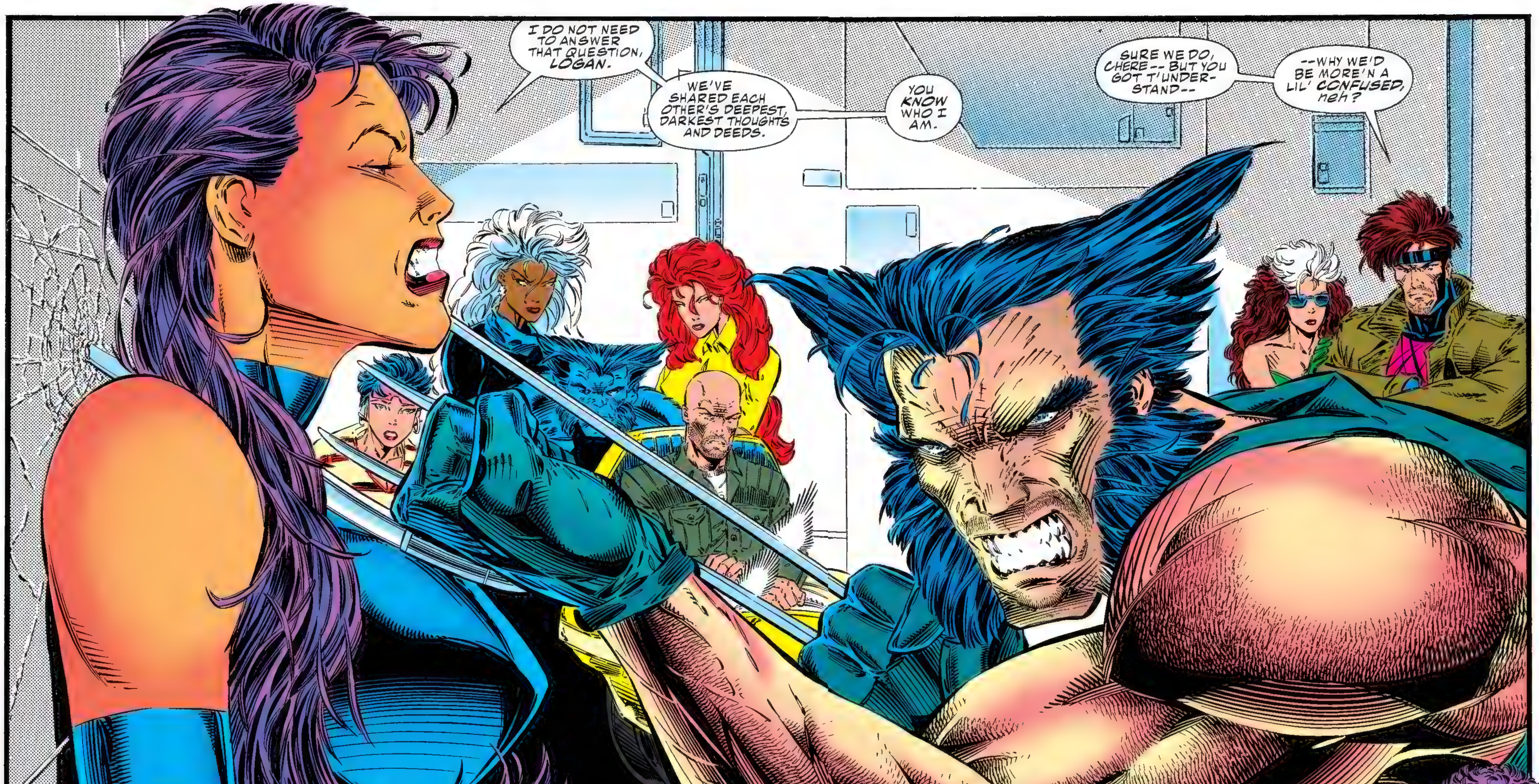
the PUZZLE QUEST

THE PUZZLE BOX


SHE CALLED HERSELF BETSY BRADDOCK.
AS THE TELEPATHIC MUTANT CODE-NAMED PSYLOCKE, SHE HAS BEEN THEIR FRIEND. THEIR COMPANION. THEIR FELLOW WARRIOR.
SHE HAS LIVED AMONG THEM, FOUGHT BESIDE THEM, AND LAUGHED AND CRIED WITH THEM. IN SHORT, SHE WAS A PART OF THE WHOLE.
SIX SECONDS AGO, THE X-MEN DISCOVERED EVERYTHING THEY THOUGHT THEY KNEW ABOUT HER IS A LIE.
AND ONE BURNING QUESTION GNAWS AT THEM, POSED BY A GRAVELLY, SMOKE-STAINED VOICE...
SO, BETS, JUST WHO THE HECK ARE YOU, THEN?!


I DO NOT NEED TO ANSWER THAT QUESTION, LOGAN.
WE'VE SHARED EACH OTHER'S DEEPEST, DARKEST THOUGHTS AND DEEDS.
YOU KNOW WHO I AM.
SURE WE DO, CHERE -- BUT YOU GOT T'UNDER-STAND --
-- WHY WE'D BE MORE'N A LIL' CONFUSED, NEH?

Stan Lee PRESENTS A TALE OF THE **X-MEN**
BY **FABIAN NICIEZA**
& **BRANDON PETERSON**

DAN PANOSIAN
INKER
BILL OAKLEY
LETTERER
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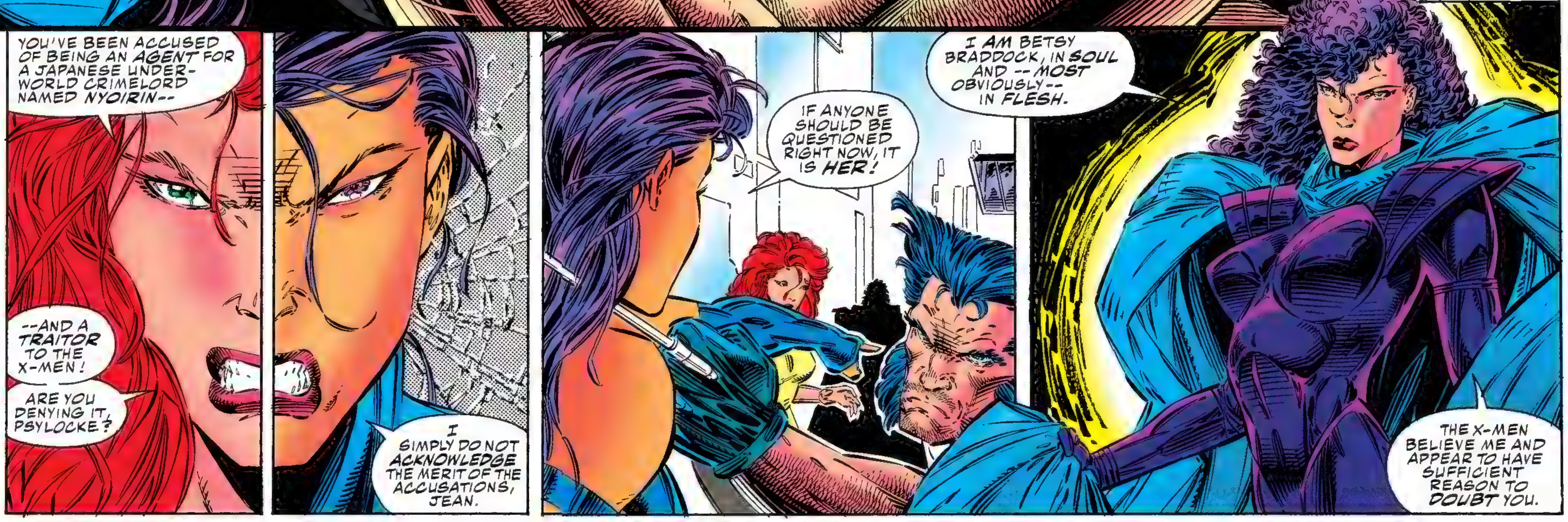
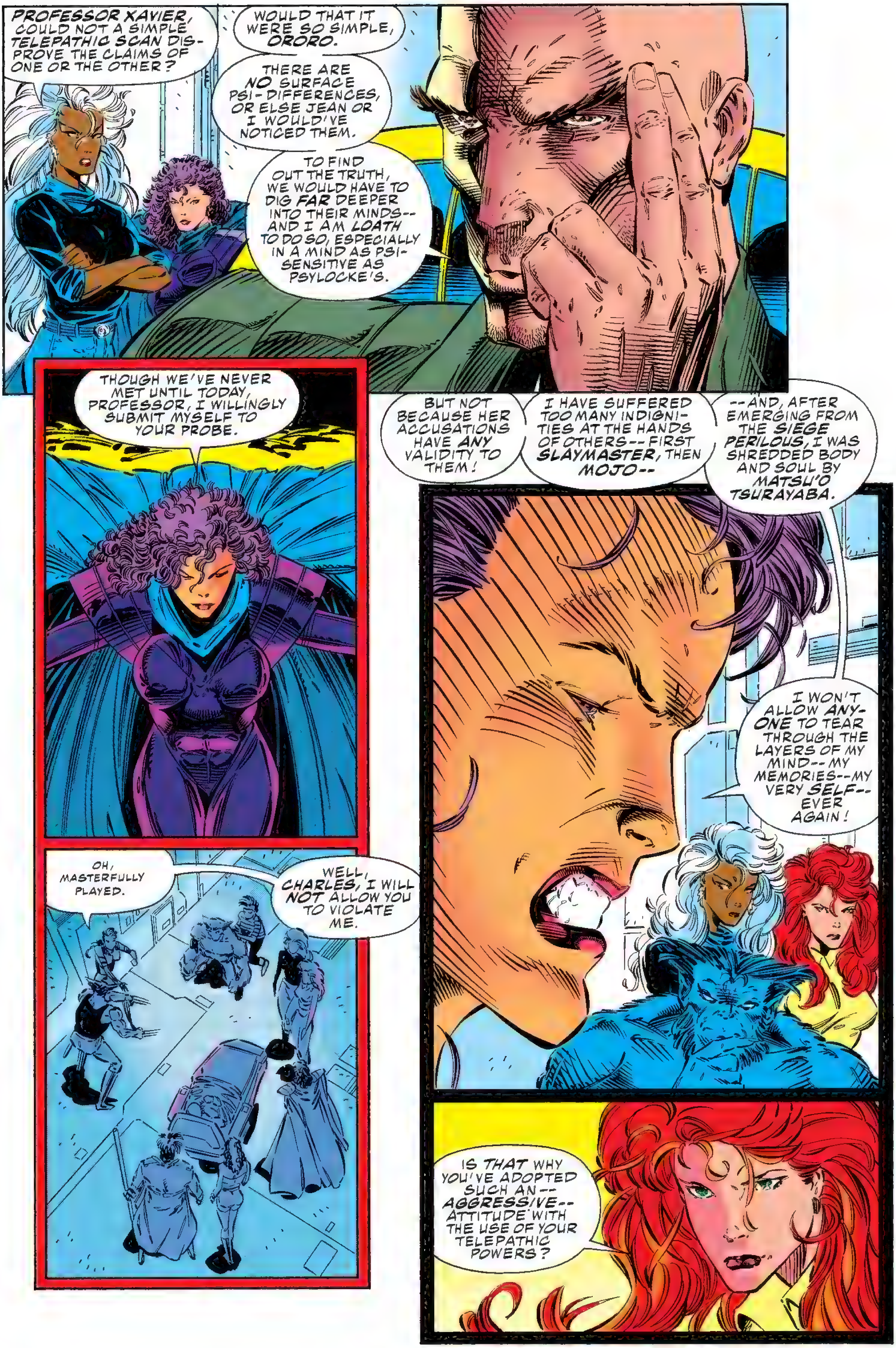
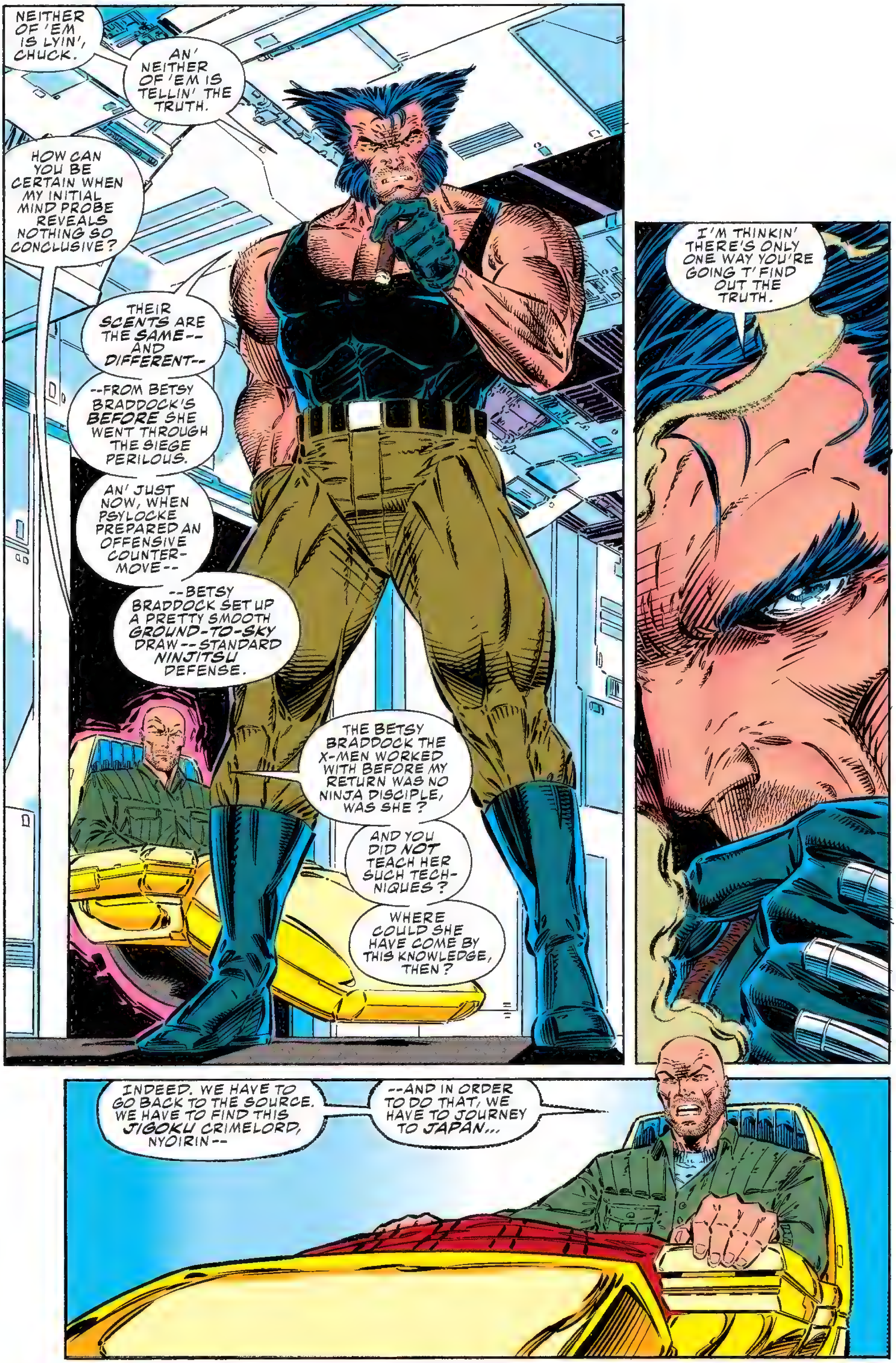
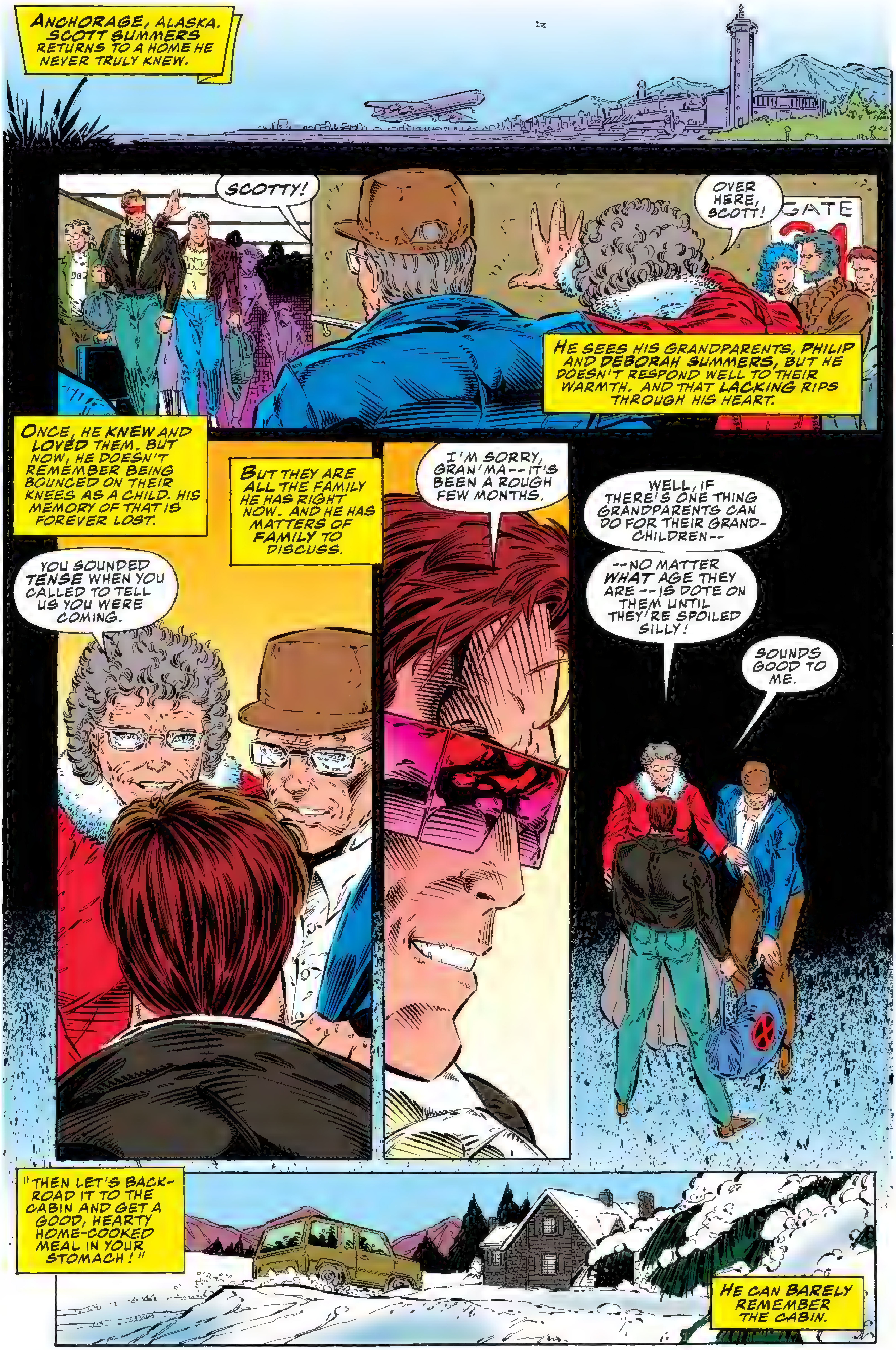

YOU'VE BEEN ACCUSED OF BEING AN AGENT FOR A JAPANESE UNDERWORLD CRIMELORD NAMED NYOIRIN --
-- AND A TRAITOR TO THE X-MEN!
ARE YOU DENYING IT, PSYLOCKE?
I SIMPLY DO NOT ACKNOWLEDGE THE MERIT OF THE ACCUSATIONS, JEAN.
IF ANYONE SHOULD BE QUESTIONED RIGHT NOW, IT IS HER!
I AM BETSY BRADDOCK, IN SOUL AND -- MOST OBVIOUSLY -- IN FLESH.
THE X-MEN BELIEVE ME AND APPEAR TO HAVE SUFFICIENT REASON TO DOUBT YOU.

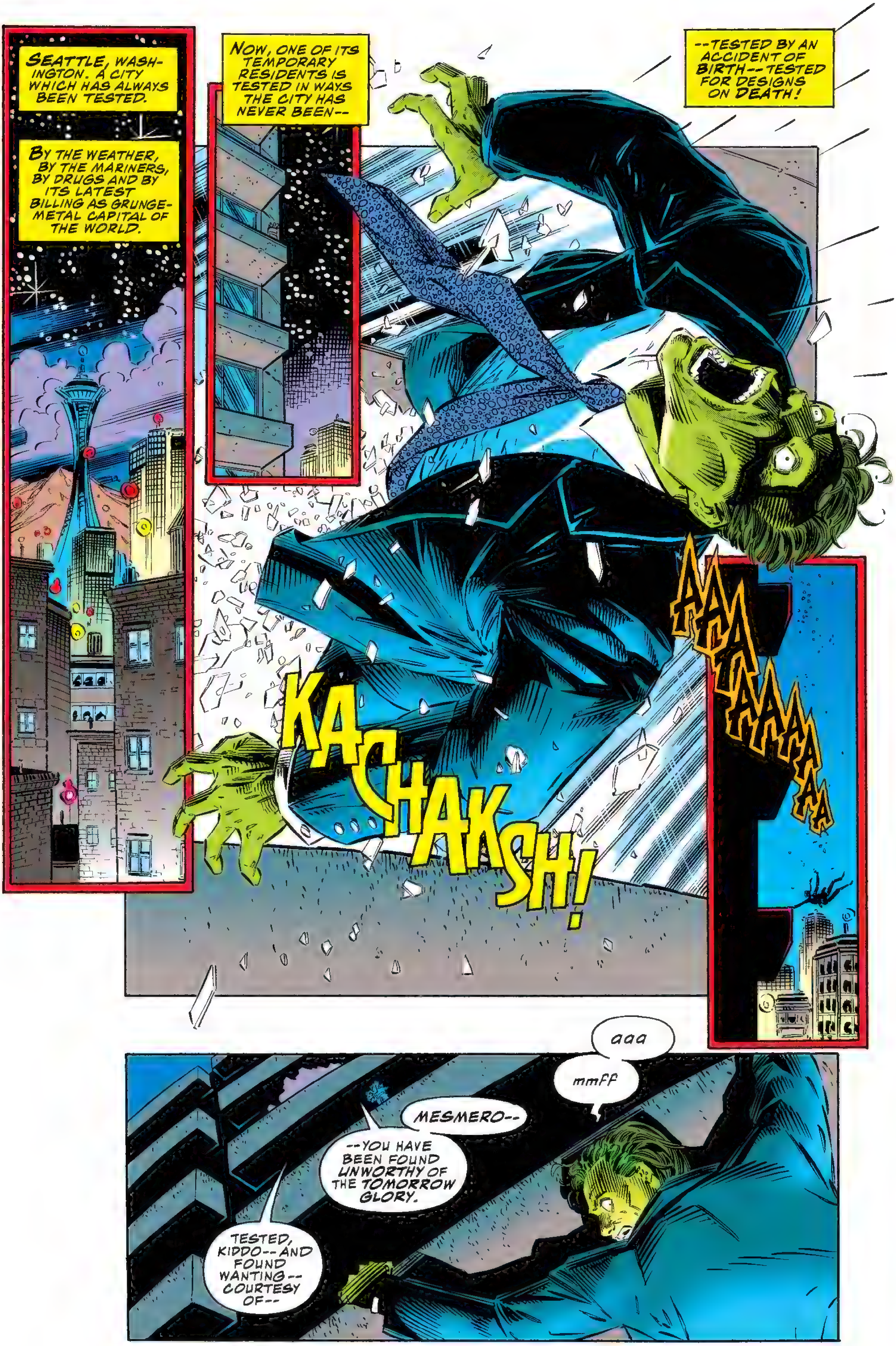

PROFESSOR XAVIER, COULD NOT A SIMPLE **TELEPATHIC SCAN** DISPROVE THE CLAIMS OF ONE OR THE OTHER?
WOULD THAT IT WERE SO SIMPLE, **ORORO.**
THERE ARE **NO** SURFACE PSI-DIFFERENCES, OR ELSE JEAN OR I WOULD'VE NOTICED THEM.
TO FIND OUT THE TRUTH, WE WOULD HAVE TO DIG **FAR** DEEPER INTO THEIR MINDS-- AND I AM **LOATH** TO DO SO, ESPECIALLY IN A MIND AS PSI-SENSITIVE AS PSYLOCKE'S.
THOUGH WE'VE NEVER MET UNTIL TODAY, PROFESSOR, I WILLINGLY SUBMIT MYSELF TO YOUR PROBE.
OH, MASTERFULLY PLAYED.
WELL, **CHARLES,** I WILL **NOT** ALLOW YOU TO VIOLATE ME.
BUT NOT BECAUSE HER ACCUSATIONS HAVE **ANY** VALIDITY TO THEM!
I HAVE SUFFERED TOO MANY INDIGNITIES AT THE HANDS OF OTHERS--FIRST **SLAYMASTER,** THEN **MOJO--**
--AND, AFTER EMERGING FROM THE **SIEGE PERILOUS,** I WAS SHREDDED BODY AND SOUL BY **MATSU'O TSURAYABA.**
I WON'T ALLOW **ANYONE** TO TEAR THROUGH THE LAYERS OF MY MIND--MY MEMORIES--MY VERY **SELF--** EVER AGAIN!
IS **THAT** WHY YOU'VE ADOPTED SUCH AN-- **AGGRESSIVE--** ATTITUDE WITH THE USE OF YOUR TELEPATHIC POWERS?

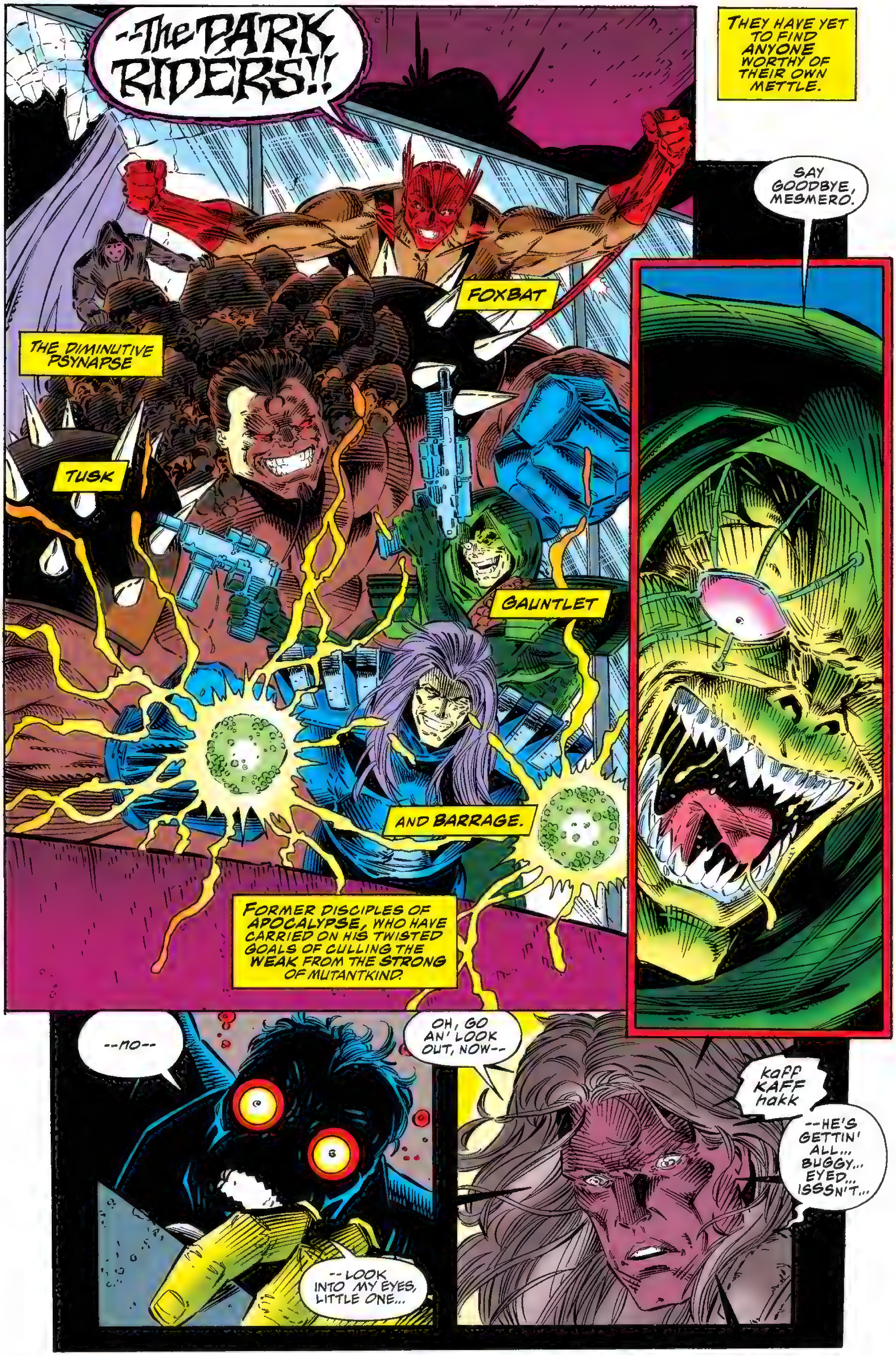
NEVER A VICTIM, ALWAYS A VICTOR, JEAN--
--THAT'S ALSO WHY I CHOSE TO STRIKE AT YOU WHEN YOU ACCUSED ME OF HAVING AN AFFAIR WITH CYCLOPS.
YOU'VE ALL ACCEPTED THAT I AM NOT THE WOMAN I ONCE WAS.
NOR ARE YOU THE WOMAN YOU CLAIM TO BE NOW!
FSHASHCHIK
LET'S HAVE IT, THEN-- LET'S FINISH THIS THE WAY WE BOTH WANT TO SEE IT DONE!
STOP!
THERE WILL BE NONE OF THAT IN MY HOME. IS THAT UNDERSTOOD?
CHUCK...
...LET'S TALK FOR A MINUTE...
FSSSSTT
I TRUST THAT WE CAN STEP OUTSIDE OF THE DANGER ROOM...
...WITHOUT THE TWO OF YOU ENGAGING IN A CLICHED SOAP OPERA TUSSLE?

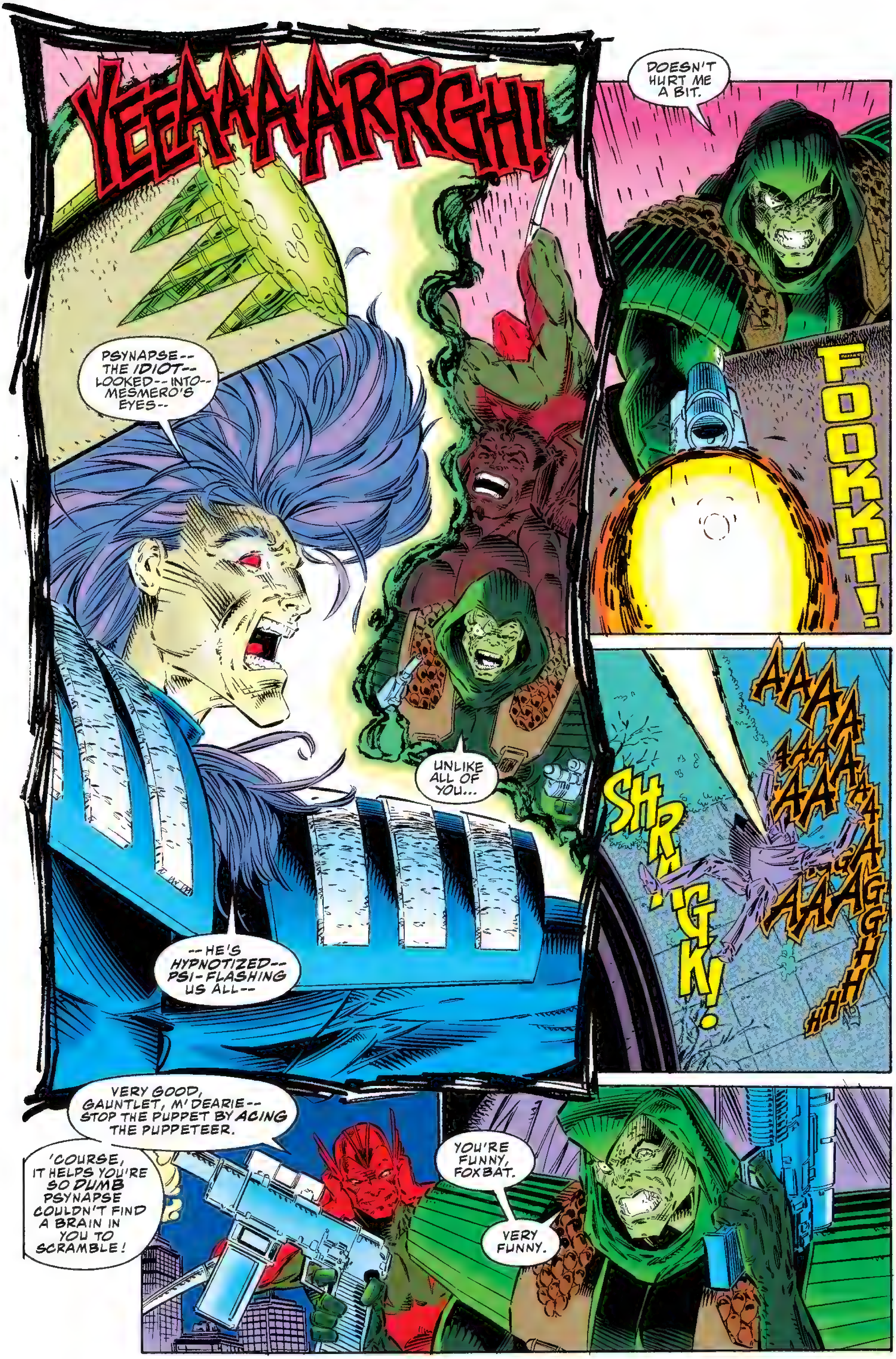

NEITHER OF 'EM IS LYIN', CHUCK.
AN' NEITHER OF 'EM IS TELLIN' THE TRUTH.
HOW CAN YOU BE CERTAIN WHEN MY INITIAL MIND PROBE REVEALS NOTHING SO CONCLUSIVE?
THEIR SCENTS ARE THE SAME--AND DIFFERENT--
--FROM BETSY BRADDOCK'S BEFORE SHE WENT THROUGH THE SIEGE PERILOUS.
AN' JUST NOW, WHEN PSYLOCKE PREPARED AN OFFENSIVE COUNTER-MOVE--
--BETSY BRADDOCK SET UP A PRETTY SMOOTH GROUND-TO-SKY DRAW--STANDARD NINJITSU DEFENSE.
THE BETSY BRADDOCK THE X-MEN WORKED WITH BEFORE MY RETURN WAS NO NINJA DISCIPLE, WAS SHE?
AND YOU DID NOT TEACH HER SUCH TECHNIQUES?
WHERE COULD SHE HAVE COME BY THIS KNOWLEDGE, THEN?
I'M THINKIN' THERE'S ONLY ONE WAY YOU'RE GOING T' FIND OUT THE TRUTH.
INDEED. WE HAVE TO GO BACK TO THE SOURCE. WE HAVE TO FIND THIS JIGOKU CRIMELORD, NYOIRIN--
--AND IN ORDER TO DO THAT, WE HAVE TO JOURNEY TO JAPAN...

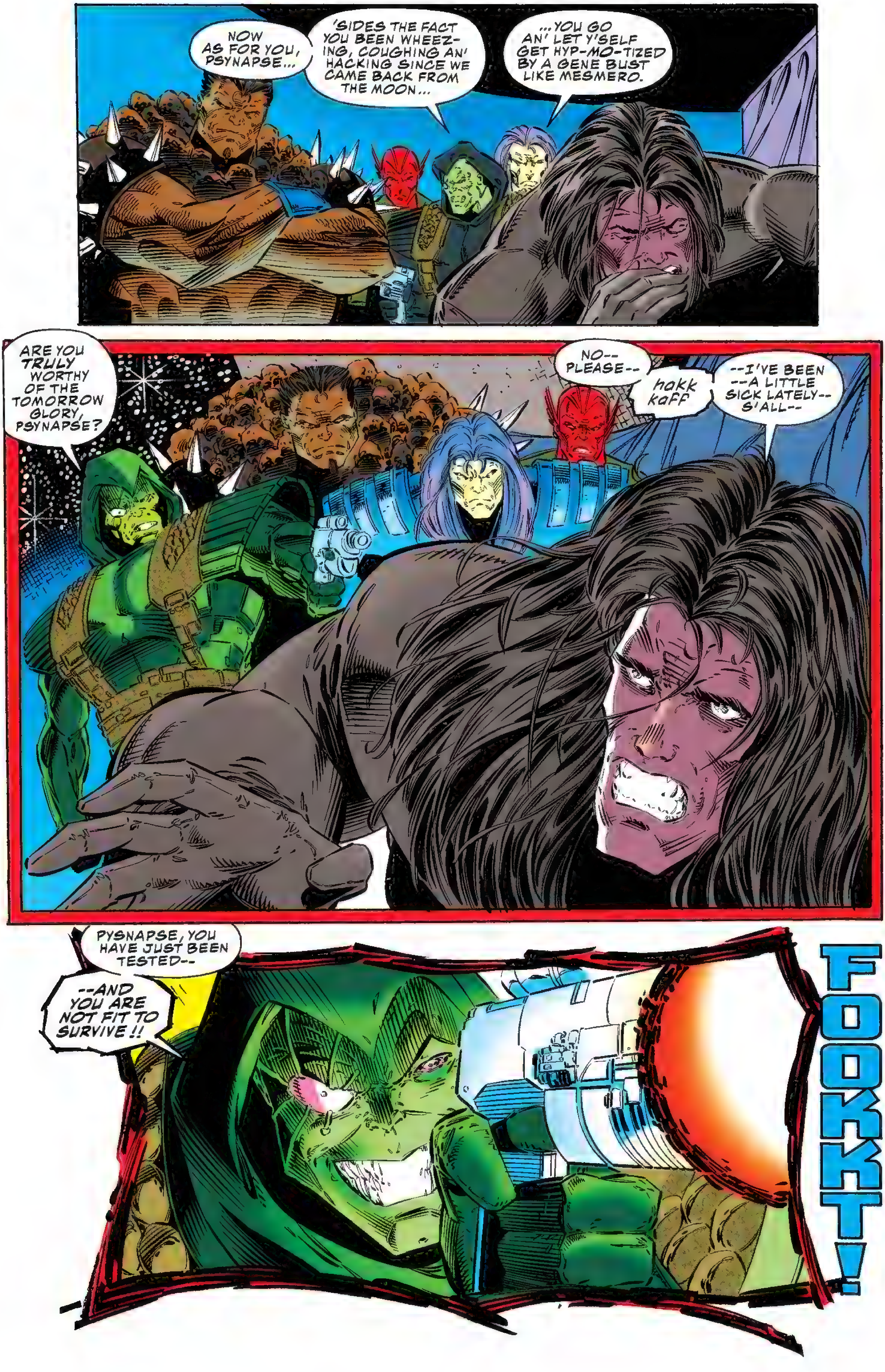

ANCHORAGE, ALASKA. SCOTT SUMMERS RETURNS TO A HOME HE NEVER TRULY KNEW.
SCOTTY!
OVER HERE, SCOTT!
GATE
HE SEES HIS GRANDPARENTS, PHILIP AND DEBORAH SUMMERS, BUT HE DOESN'T RESPOND WELL TO THEIR WARMTH. AND THAT LACKING RIPS THROUGH HIS HEART.
ONCE, HE KNEW AND LOVED THEM. BUT NOW, HE DOESN'T REMEMBER BEING BOUNCED ON THEIR KNEES AS A CHILD. HIS MEMORY OF THAT IS FOREVER LOST.
BUT THEY ARE ALL THE FAMILY HE HAS RIGHT NOW. AND HE HAS MATTERS OF FAMILY TO DISCUSS.
YOU SOUNDED TENSE WHEN YOU CALLED TO TELL US YOU WERE COMING.
I'M SORRY, GRAN'MA -- IT'S BEEN A ROUGH FEW MONTHS.
WELL, IF THERE'S ONE THING GRANDPARENTS CAN DO FOR THEIR GRAND-CHILDREN --
-- NO MATTER WHAT AGE THEY ARE -- IS DOTE ON THEM UNTIL THEY'RE SPOILED SILLY!
SOUNDS GOOD TO ME.
"THEN LET'S BACK-ROAD IT TO THE CABIN AND GET A GOOD, HEARTY HOME-COOKED MEAL IN YOUR STOMACH!"
HE CAN BARELY REMEMBER THE CABIN.

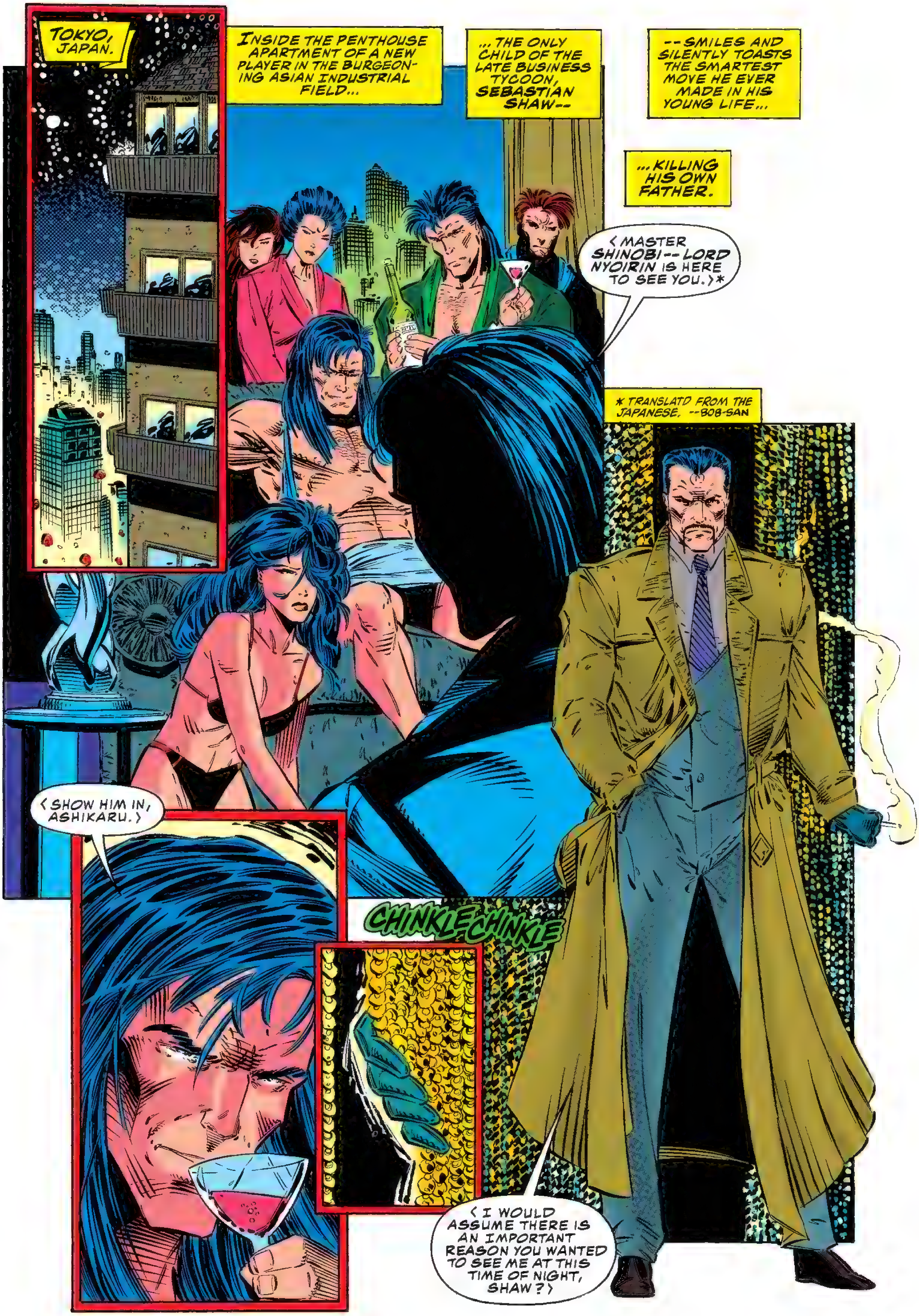
SNIPPETS OF A PAST-- HIS BROTHER ALEX FALLING INTO A SNOWBANK--
SLEIGH-RIDING -- NO -- TOBOGGANING -- WITH PHILIP DOWN THE HILLSIDE.
WAS THE AIR THIS CLEAN BACK THEN? DID HE FEEL THIS WARM INSIDE NO MATTER HOW COLD IT WAS OUTSIDE?
SCOTT... WE KNOW YOU HAVEN'T BEEN BACK SINCE MADELYNE AND THE BABY... PASSED ON...
WE WANT TO DO WHATEVER WE CAN TO HELP, SON... WE KNOW...
THE TRUTH.
EXCUSE ME?
THE TRUTH. YOU DESERVE TO KNOW IT.
ABOUT MADELYNE AND NATHAN CHRISTOPHER...
uhm-- THE TRUTH ABOUT WHAT, SCOTTY?
...HOW THEY LIVED-- HOW THEY DIED...
...AND HOW THEY LIVED AGAIN...

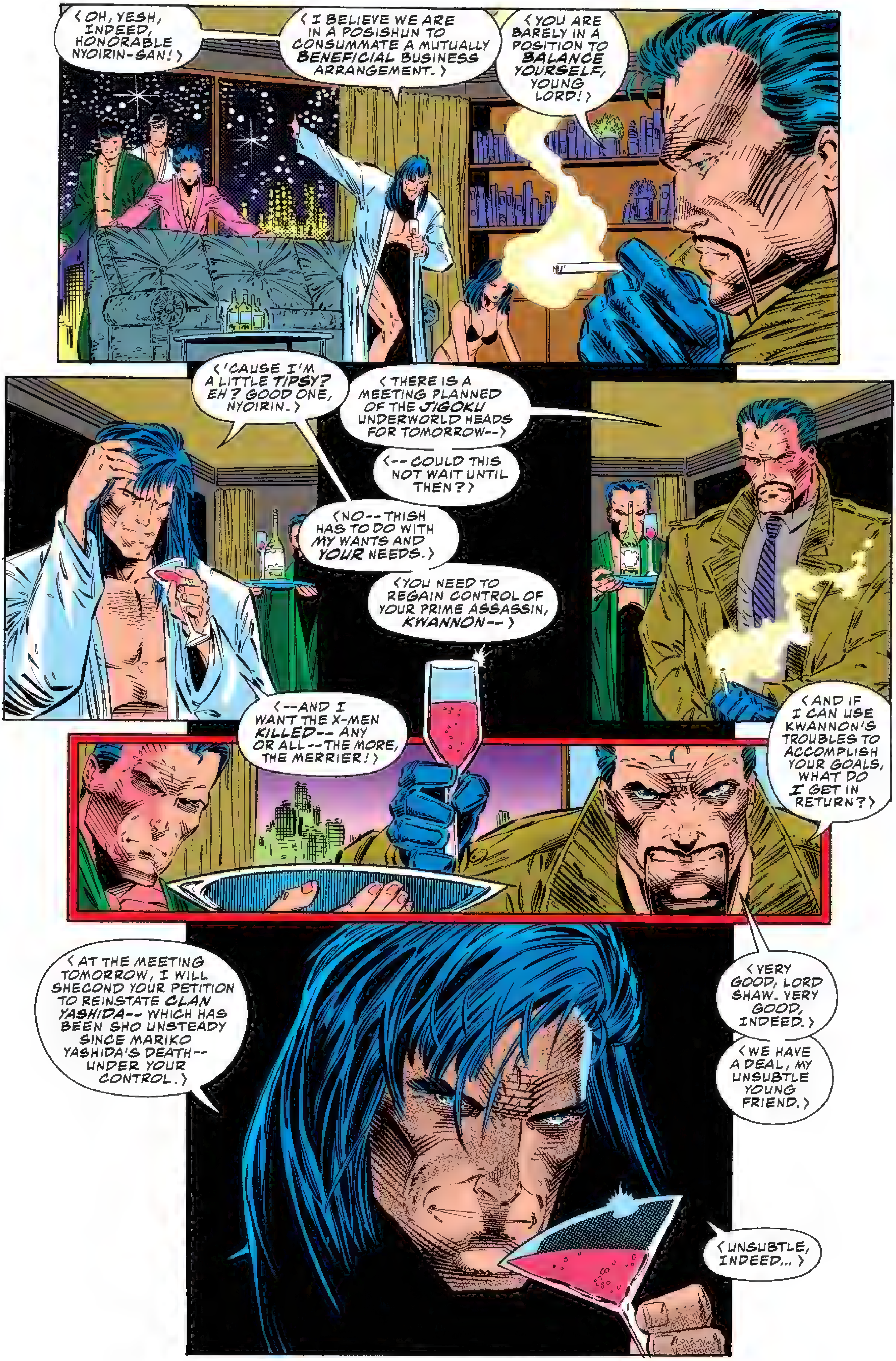

SEATTLE, WASHINGTON. A CITY WHICH HAS ALWAYS BEEN TESTED.
BY THE WEATHER, BY THE MARINERS, BY DRUGS AND BY ITS LATEST BILLING AS GRUNGE-METAL CAPITAL OF THE WORLD.
NOW, ONE OF ITS TEMPORARY RESIDENTS IS TESTED IN WAYS THE CITY HAS NEVER BEEN--
--TESTED BY AN ACCIDENT OF BIRTH--TESTED FOR DESIGNS ON DEATH!
KACHAKSH!
AAAAAAAAAA
aaa
mmff
MESMERO--
--YOU HAVE BEEN FOUND UNWORTHY OF THE TOMORROW GLORY.
TESTED, KIDDO--AND FOUND WANTING--COURTESY OF--

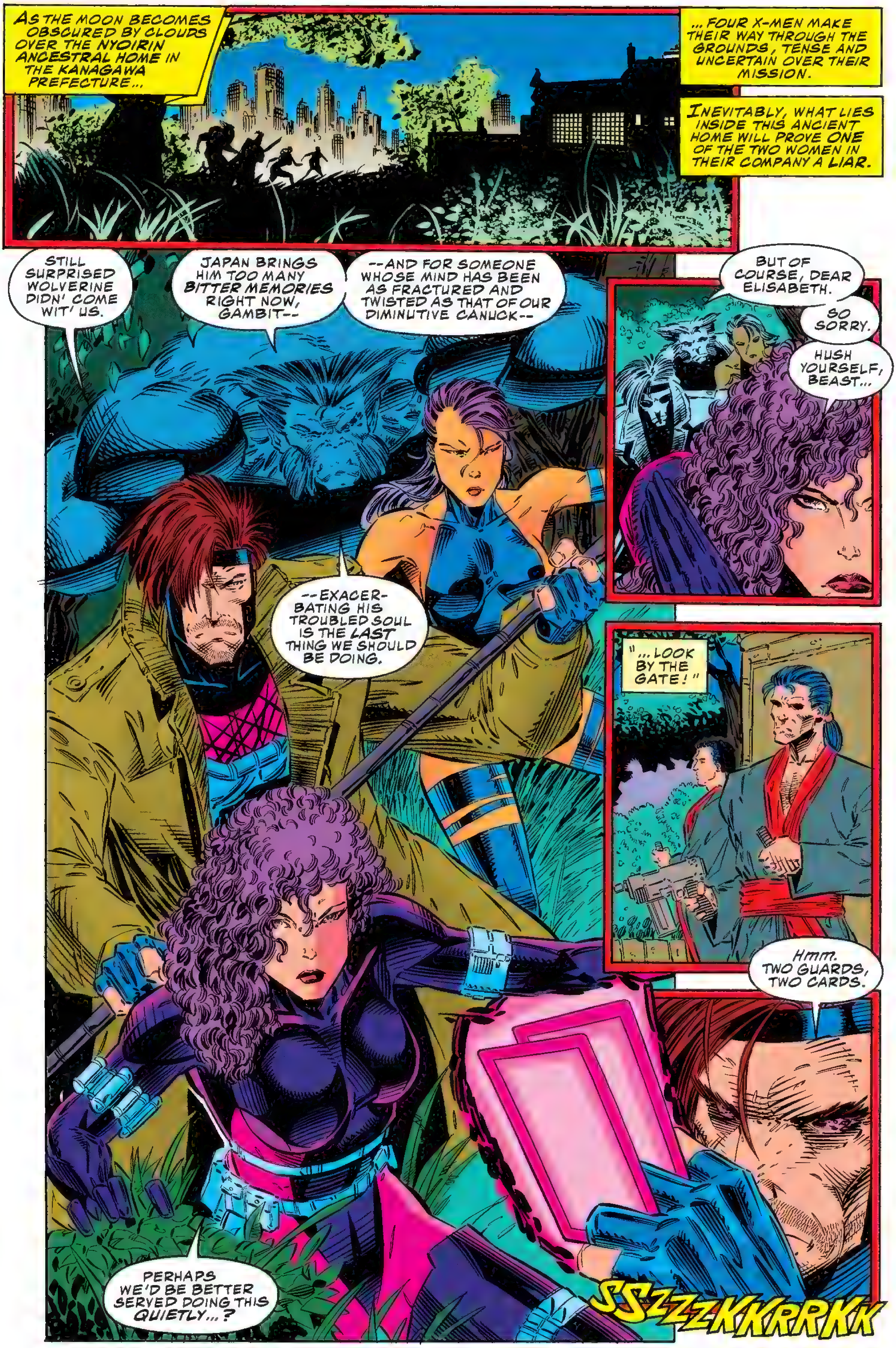

--The DARK RIDERS!!
FOXBAT
THE DIMINUTIVE PSYNAPSE
TUSK
GAUNTLET
AND BARRAGE.
FORMER DISCIPLES OF APOCALYPSE, WHO HAVE CARRIED ON HIS TWISTED GOALS OF CULLING THE WEAK FROM THE STRONG OF MUTANTKIND.
THEY HAVE YET TO FIND ANYONE WORTHY OF THEIR OWN METTLE.
SAY GOODBYE, MESMERO.
--NO--
OH, GO AN' LOOK OUT, NOW--
kaff KAFF hakk
--HE'S GETTIN' ALL... BUGGY... EYED... ISSSN'T...
--LOOK INTO MY EYES, LITTLE ONE...


YEEAAAARRGH!
PSYNAPSE-- THE *IDIOT*-- LOOKED-- INTO-- MESMERO'S EYES--
UNLIKE ALL OF YOU...
--HE'S *HYPNOTIZED*-- *PSI-FLASHING* US ALL--
DOESN'T HURT ME A BIT.
FOOKKT!
SHRA'GK!
AAAAAAAAAAAAAGGHHHH
VERY GOOD, GAUNTLET, M'DEARIE-- STOP THE PUPPET BY *ACING* THE PUPPETEER.
'COURSE, IT HELPS YOU'RE SO *DUMB* PSYNAPSE COULDN'T FIND A BRAIN IN YOU TO SCRAMBLE!
YOU'RE FUNNY, FOXBAT.
VERY FUNNY.


NOW AS FOR YOU, PSYNAPSE...
'SIDES THE FACT YOU BEEN WHEEZING, COUGHING AN' HACKING SINCE WE CAME BACK FROM THE MOON...
...YOU GO AN' LET Y'SELF GET HYP-MO-TIZED BY A GENE BUST LIKE MESMERO.
ARE YOU TRULY WORTHY OF THE TOMORROW GLORY, PSYNAPSE?
NO-- PLEASE--
hokk koff
--I'VE BEEN --A LITTLE SICK LATELY-- S'ALL--
PYSNAPSE, YOU HAVE JUST BEEN TESTED--
--AND YOU ARE NOT FIT TO SURVIVE!!
FOOKT!

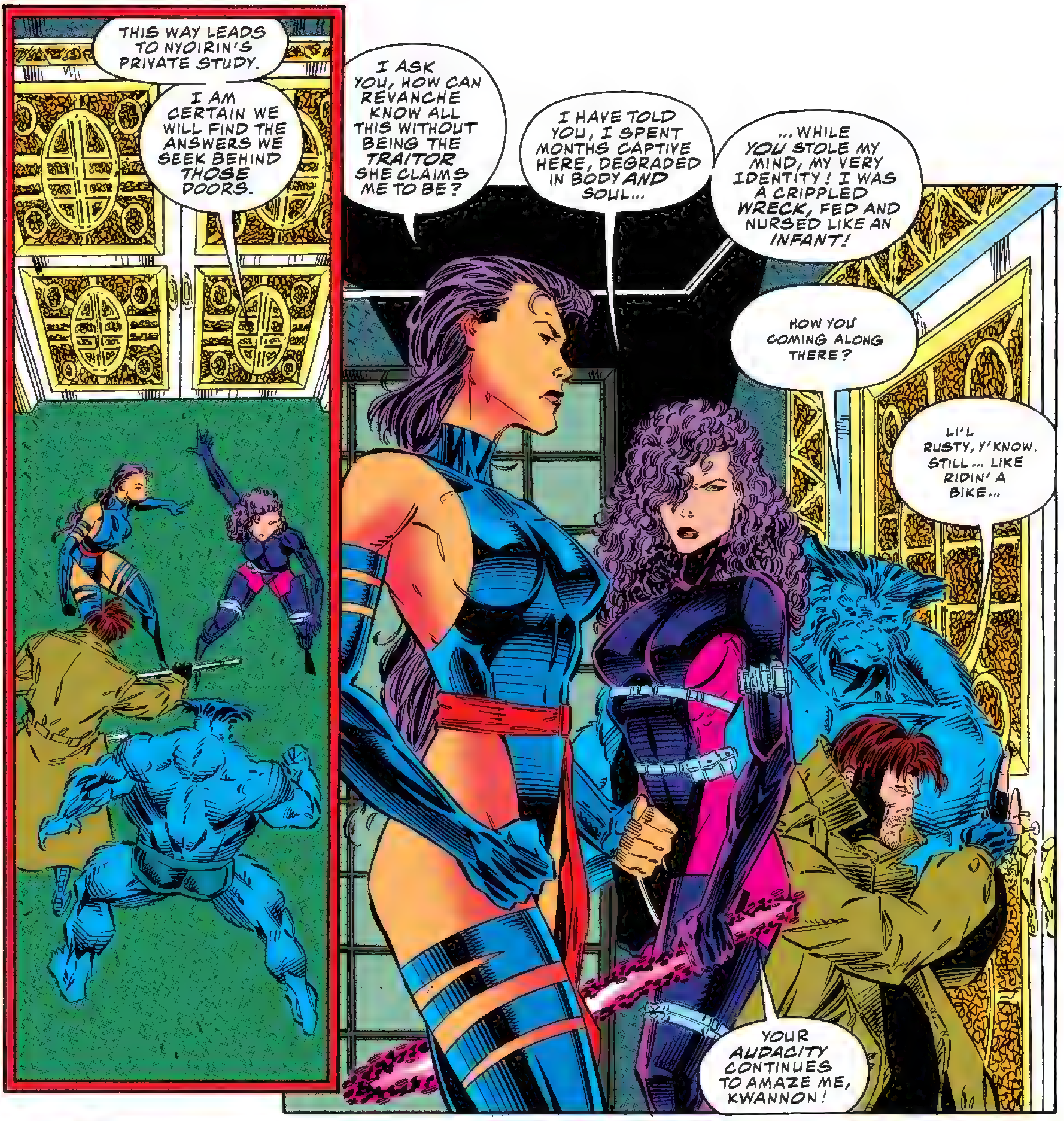

TOKYO, JAPAN.
INSIDE THE PENTHOUSE APARTMENT OF A NEW PLAYER IN THE BURGEONING ASIAN INDUSTRIAL FIELD...
...THE ONLY CHILD OF THE LATE BUSINESS TYCOON, SEBASTIAN SHAW--
--SMILES AND SILENTLY TOASTS THE SMARTEST MOVE HE EVER MADE IN HIS YOUNG LIFE...
...KILLING HIS OWN FATHER.
‹MASTER SHINOBI--LORD NYOIRIN IS HERE TO SEE YOU.›*
* TRANSLATD FROM THE JAPANESE. --BOB-SAN
‹SHOW HIM IN, ASHIKARU.›
CHINKLE CHINKLE
‹I WOULD ASSUME THERE IS AN IMPORTANT REASON YOU WANTED TO SEE ME AT THIS TIME OF NIGHT, SHAW?›

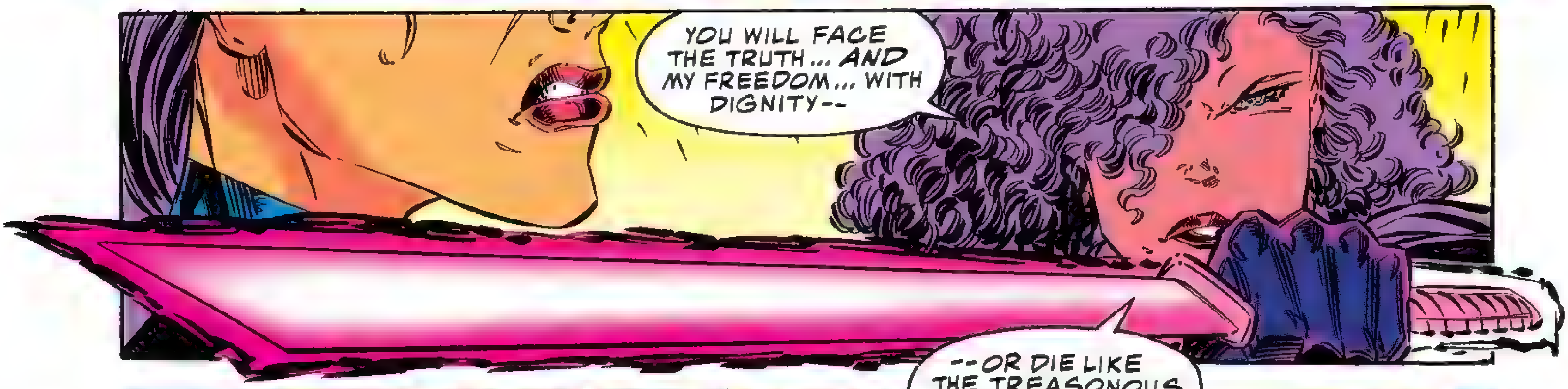

‹ OH, YESH, INDEED, HONORABLE NYOIRIN-SAN! ›
‹ I BELIEVE WE ARE IN A POSISHUN TO CONSUMMATE A MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL BUSINESS ARRANGEMENT. ›
‹ YOU ARE BARELY IN A POSITION TO BALANCE YOURSELF, YOUNG LORD! ›
‹ 'CAUSE I'M A LITTLE TIPSY? EH? GOOD ONE, NYOIRIN. ›
‹ THERE IS A MEETING PLANNED OF THE JIGOKU UNDERWORLD HEADS FOR TOMORROW-- ›
‹ --COULD THIS NOT WAIT UNTIL THEN? ›
‹ NO--THISH HAS TO DO WITH MY WANTS AND YOUR NEEDS. ›
‹ YOU NEED TO REGAIN CONTROL OF YOUR PRIME ASSASSIN, KWANNON-- ›
‹ --AND I WANT THE X-MEN KILLED-- ANY OR ALL--THE MORE, THE MERRIER! ›
‹ AND IF I CAN USE KWANNON'S TROUBLES TO ACCOMPLISH YOUR GOALS, WHAT DO I GET IN RETURN? ›
‹ AT THE MEETING TOMORROW, I WILL SHECOND YOUR PETITION TO REINSTATE CLAN YASHIDA-- WHICH HAS BEEN SHO UNSTEADY SINCE MARIKO YASHIDA'S DEATH-- UNDER YOUR CONTROL. ›
‹ VERY GOOD, LORD SHAW. VERY GOOD, INDEED. ›
‹ WE HAVE A DEAL, MY UNSUBTLE YOUNG FRIEND. ›
‹ UNSUBTLE, INDEED... ›

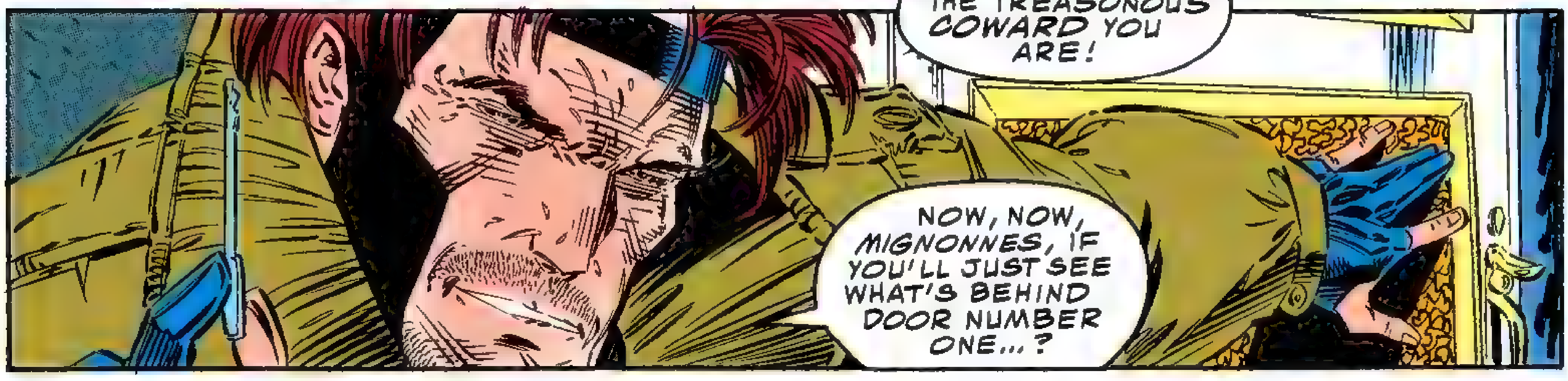

AS THE MOON BECOMES OBSCURED BY CLOUDS OVER THE NYOIRIN ANCESTRAL HOME IN THE KANAGAWA PREFECTURE...
...FOUR X-MEN MAKE THEIR WAY THROUGH THE GROUNDS, TENSE AND UNCERTAIN OVER THEIR MISSION.
INEVITABLY, WHAT LIES INSIDE THIS ANCIENT HOME WILL PROVE ONE OF THE TWO WOMEN IN THEIR COMPANY A LIAR.
STILL SURPRISED WOLVERINE DIDN' COME WIT' US.
JAPAN BRINGS HIM TOO MANY BITTER MEMORIES RIGHT NOW, GAMBIT--
--AND FOR SOMEONE WHOSE MIND HAS BEEN AS FRACTURED AND TWISTED AS THAT OF OUR DIMINUTIVE CANUCK--
--EXACERBATING HIS TROUBLED SOUL IS THE LAST THING WE SHOULD BE DOING.
BUT OF COURSE, DEAR ELISABETH.
SO SORRY.
HUSH YOURSELF, BEAST...
"...LOOK BY THE GATE!"
Hmm. TWO GUARDS, TWO CARDS.
PERHAPS WE'D BE BETTER SERVED DOING THIS QUIETLY...?
SSZZZKKKRRRKK

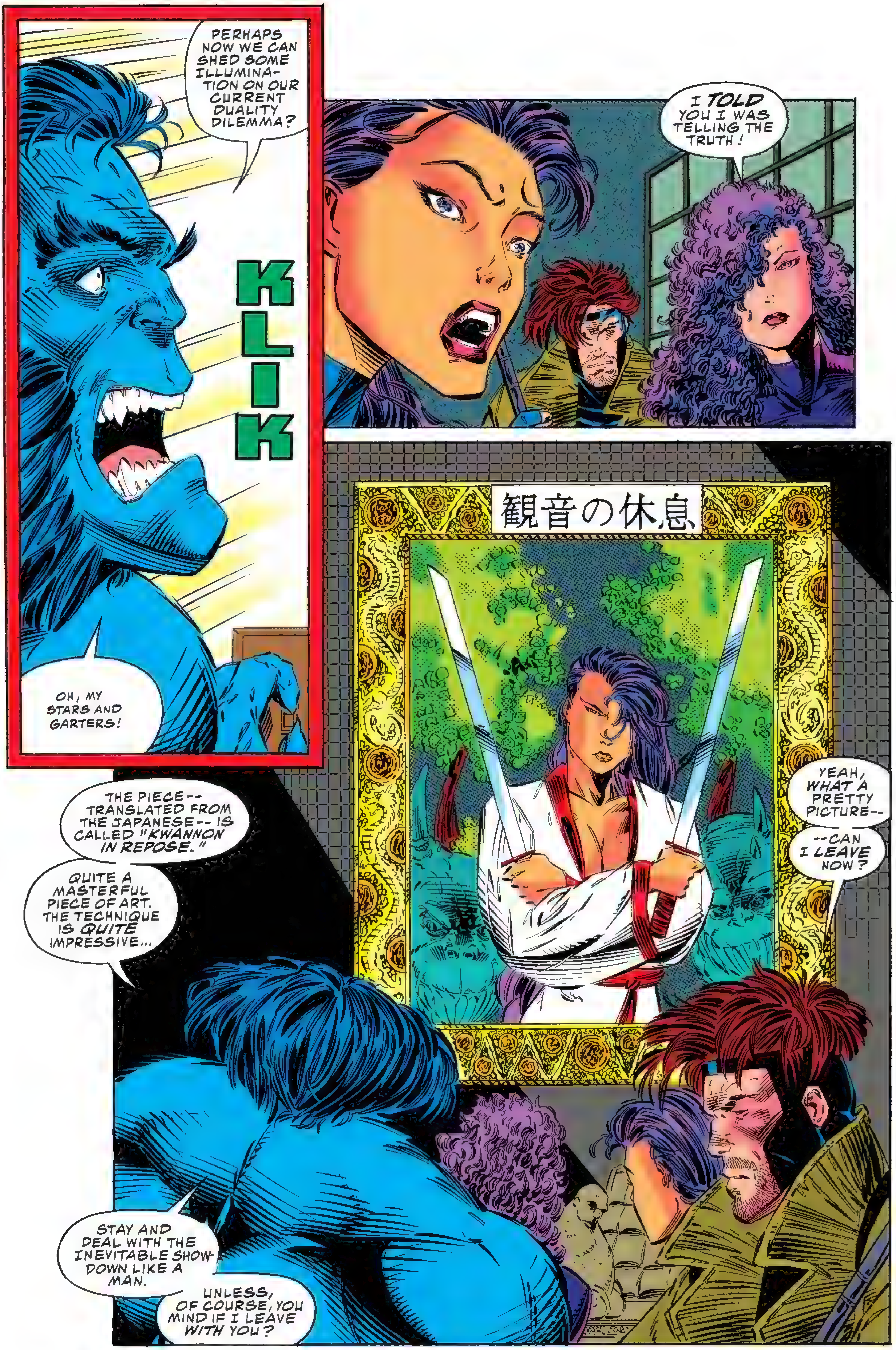
TWO DOWN--
--THIS IS *TOO* EASY.
SHAFAZZK
I WARN YOU, GAMBIT, DO NOT GET OVERCONFIDENT.
ALL OF YOU, BE PREPARED--
--NYOIRIN'S ESTATE HAS *EYES* WE CANNOT SEE.
AND YOU KNOW THIS HOUSE *FAR* TOO WELL FOR SOMEONE WHO CLAIMS TO BE *INNOCENT* OF ANY WRONGDOING.
MY FAMILIARITY COMES ONLY FROM HAVING BEEN HELD *PRISONER* HERE FOR *MONTHS*, KWANNON!
LADIES, DO I HAVE TO ASK YOU *AGAIN* TO STOP THIS?
THEY NEED A GOOD *SPANKIN'*.
SUICIDAL, ARE YOU, MR. LEBEAU?

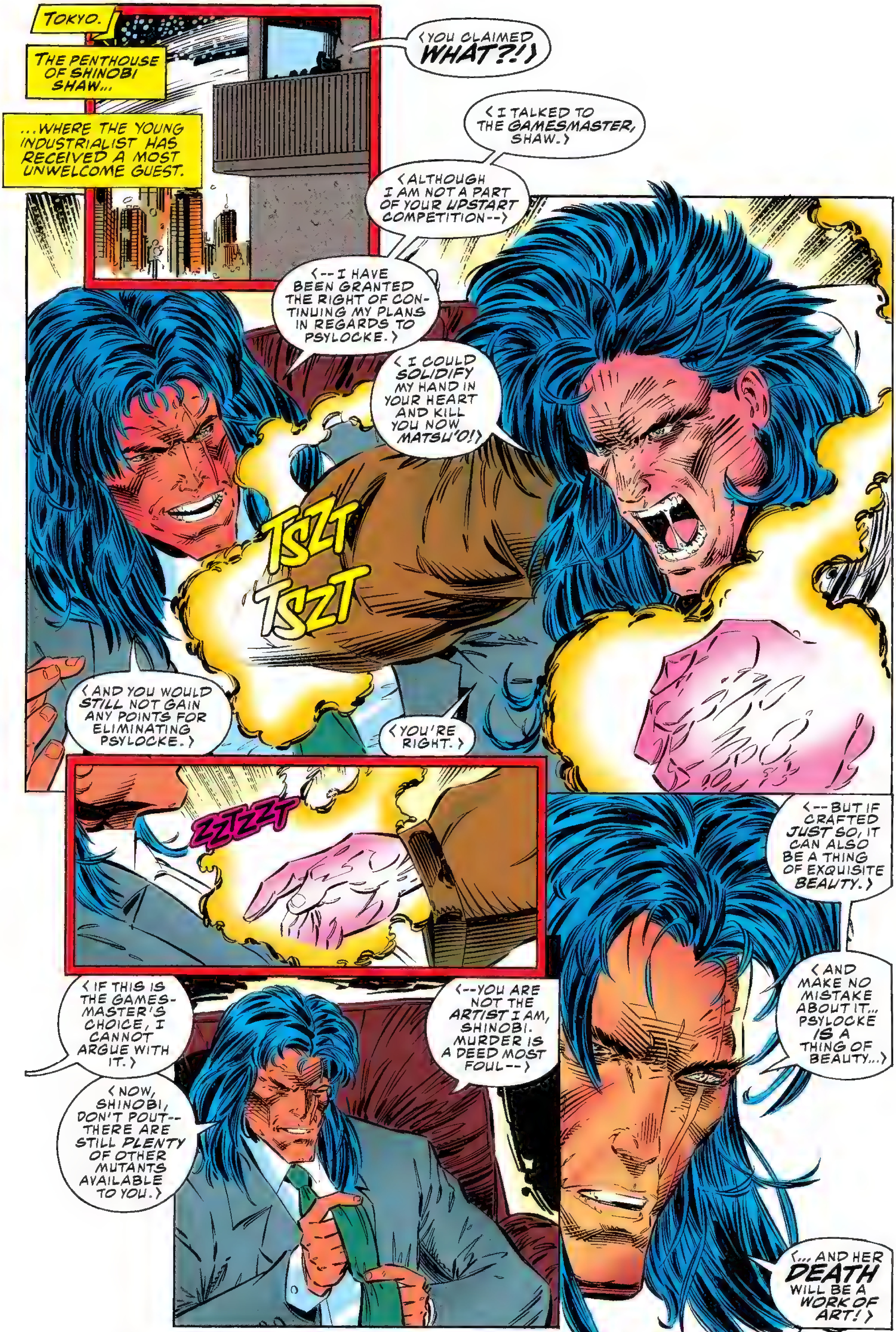
I GUESS WE MUST *ALL* BE.
THEY ARE NYOIRIN'S ELITE *DEFENSE CADRE!*
WHICH IS A POLITE WAY OF SAYING THEY ARE NO MATCH FOR YOU, *eh,* REVANCHE?
SEE THE WAY DEY BOTH FIGHT, *HENRI?*
YES. *QUITE* SKILLFULL, AREN'T THEY?
TOO. MIRROR IMAGES OF EACH OTHER.
THIS SHOO IS GETTIN' *REALLY* INTERESTIN' NOW, THOUGH, HUH?

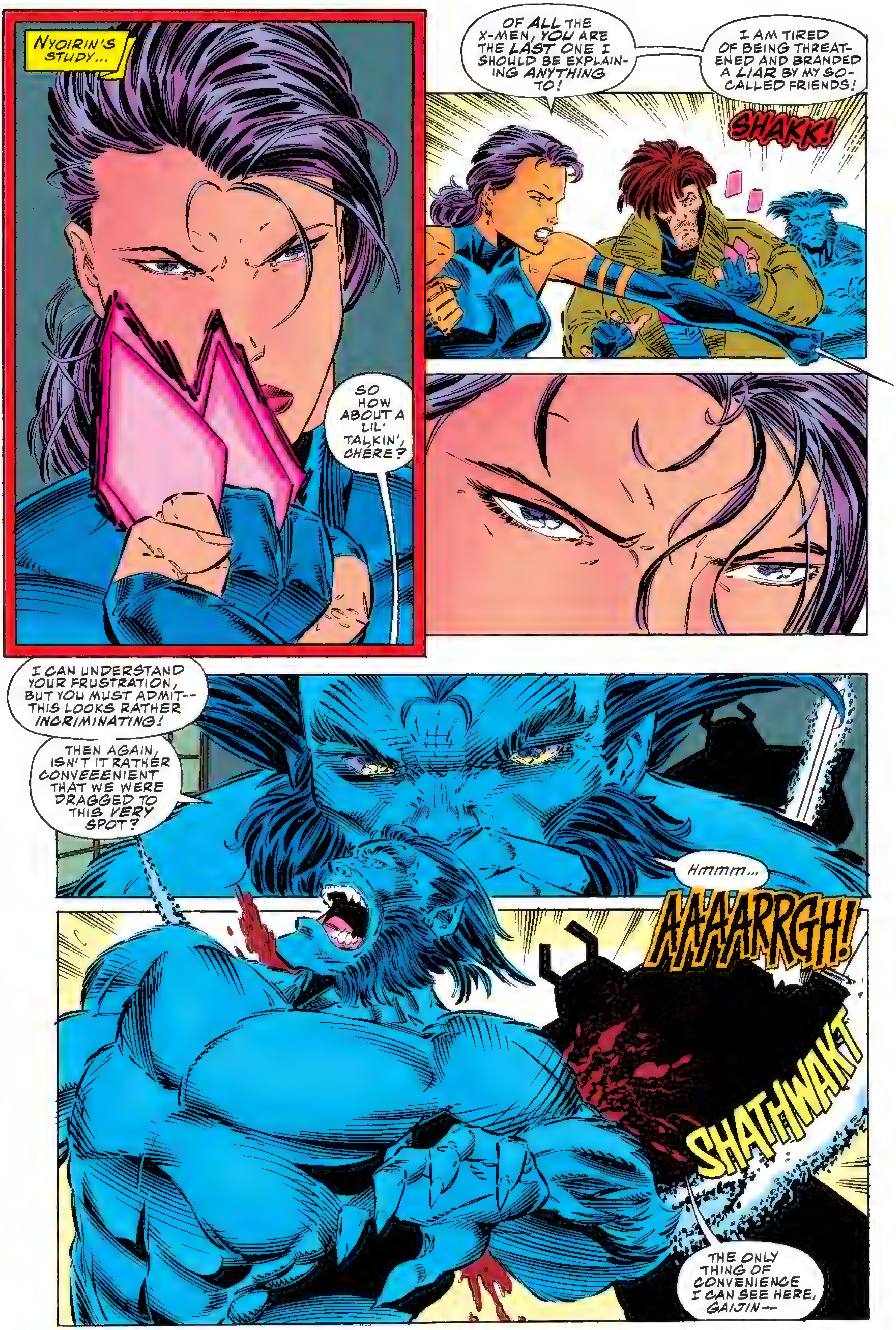

THIS WAY LEADS TO NYOIRIN'S PRIVATE STUDY.
I AM CERTAIN WE WILL FIND THE ANSWERS WE SEEK BEHIND *THOSE* DOORS.
I ASK YOU, HOW CAN REVANCHE KNOW ALL THIS WITHOUT BEING THE *TRAITOR* SHE CLAIMS ME TO BE?
I HAVE TOLD YOU, I SPENT MONTHS CAPTIVE HERE, DEGRADED IN BODY *AND* SOUL...
...WHILE *YOU* STOLE MY MIND, MY VERY IDENTITY! I WAS A CRIPPLED *WRECK*, FED AND NURSED LIKE AN *INFANT!*
HOW YOU COMING ALONG THERE?
LI'L RUSTY, Y'KNOW. STILL... LIKE RIDIN' A BIKE...
YOUR *AUDACITY* CONTINUES TO AMAZE ME, KWANNON!


YOU WILL FACE THE TRUTH... *AND* MY FREEDOM... WITH DIGNITY--
--OR DIE LIKE THE TREASONOUS *COWARD* YOU ARE!

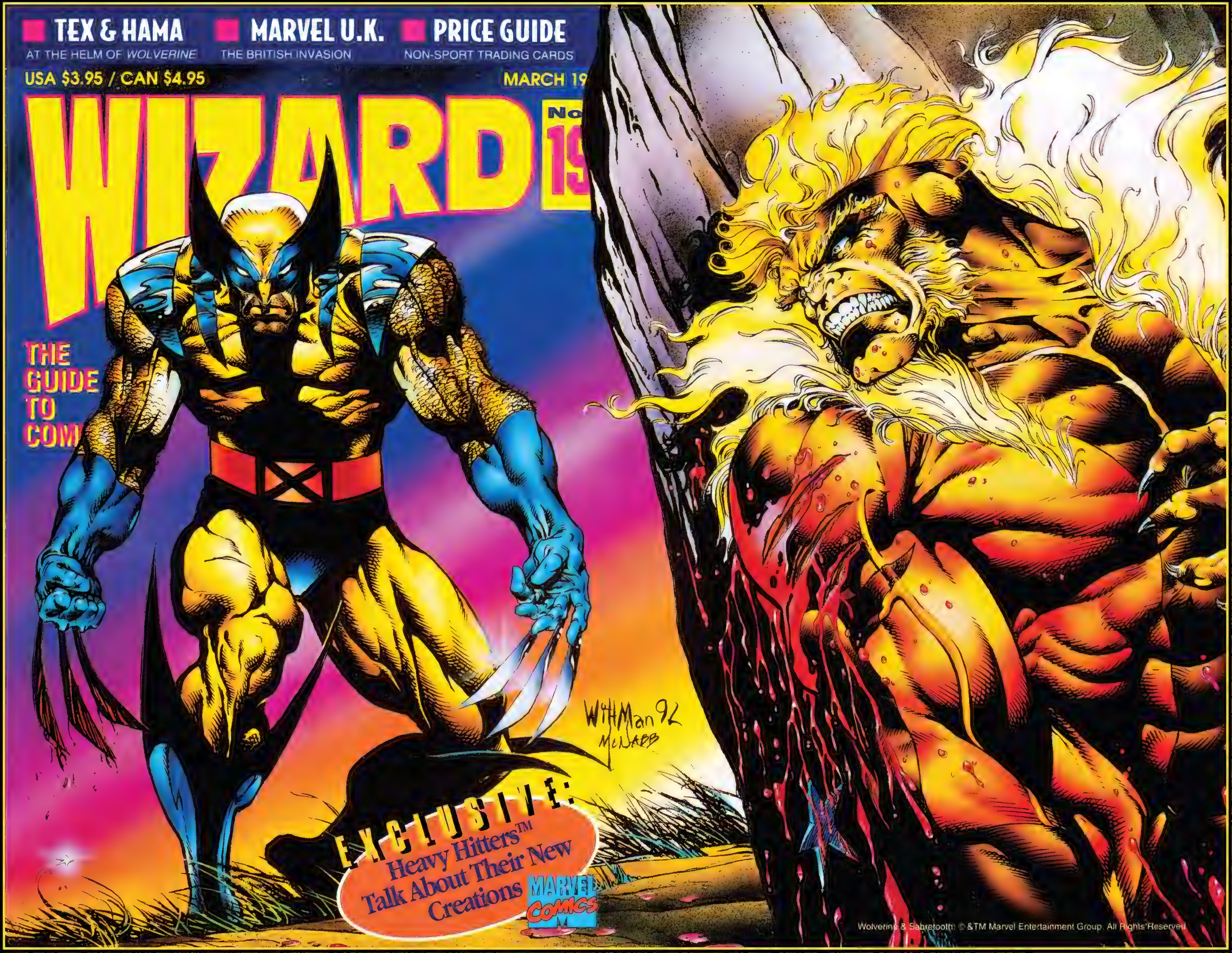

NOW, NOW, *MIGNONNES*, IF YOU'LL JUST SEE WHAT'S BEHIND DOOR NUMBER ONE...?


PERHAPS NOW WE CAN SHED SOME ILLUMINATION ON OUR CURRENT DUALITY DILEMMA?
KLIK
OH, MY STARS AND GARTERS!
I *TOLD* YOU I WAS TELLING THE TRUTH!
観音の休息
THE PIECE--TRANSLATED FROM THE JAPANESE--IS CALLED "*KWANNON IN REPOSE.*"
QUITE A MASTERFUL PIECE OF ART. THE TECHNIQUE IS *QUITE* IMPRESSIVE...
YEAH, *WHAT A* PRETTY PICTURE--
--CAN I *LEAVE* NOW?
STAY AND DEAL WITH THE INEVITABLE SHOWDOWN LIKE A MAN.
UNLESS, OF COURSE, YOU MIND IF I LEAVE *WITH* YOU?


TOKYO.
THE PENTHOUSE OF SHINOBI SHAW...
...WHERE THE YOUNG INDUSTRIALIST HAS RECEIVED A MOST UNWELCOME GUEST.
‹YOU CLAIMED WHAT?!›
‹I TALKED TO THE GAMESMASTER, SHAW.›
‹ALTHOUGH I AM NOT A PART OF YOUR UPSTART COMPETITION--›
‹--I HAVE BEEN GRANTED THE RIGHT OF CONTINUING MY PLANS IN REGARDS TO PSYLOCKE.›
‹I COULD SOLIDIFY MY HAND IN YOUR HEART AND KILL YOU NOW MATSU'O!›
TSZT TSZT
‹AND YOU WOULD STILL NOT GAIN ANY POINTS FOR ELIMINATING PSYLOCKE.›
‹YOU'RE RIGHT.›
ZZTZZT
‹--BUT IF CRAFTED JUST SO, IT CAN ALSO BE A THING OF EXQUISITE BEAUTY.›
‹IF THIS IS THE GAMESMASTER'S CHOICE, I CANNOT ARGUE WITH IT.›
‹NOW, SHINOBI, DON'T POUT--THERE ARE STILL PLENTY OF OTHER MUTANTS AVAILABLE TO YOU.›
‹--YOU ARE NOT THE ARTIST I AM, SHINOBI. MURDER IS A DEED MOST FOUL--›
‹AND MAKE NO MISTAKE ABOUT IT... PSYLOCKE IS A THING OF BEAUTY...›
‹...AND HER DEATH WILL BE A WORK OF ART!›


NYOIRIN'S STUDY...
OF ALL THE X-MEN, YOU ARE THE LAST ONE I SHOULD BE EXPLAINING ANYTHING TO!
I AM TIRED OF BEING THREATENED AND BRANDED A LIAR BY MY SO-CALLED FRIENDS!
SHAKK!
SO HOW ABOUT A LIL' TALKIN', CHÉRE?
I CAN UNDERSTAND YOUR FRUSTRATION, BUT YOU MUST ADMIT-- THIS LOOKS RATHER INCRIMINATING!
THEN AGAIN, ISN'T IT RATHER CONVEEEENIENT THAT WE WERE DRAGGED TO THIS VERY SPOT?
Hmmm...
AAAARRGH!
SHATHWAKT
THE ONLY THING OF CONVENIENCE I CAN SEE HERE, GAIJIN--

UH OH.
LOOKS LIKE EVERTHIN' GONNA HIT THE FAN NOW.
--IS HOW NICE IT IS FOR ALL OF YOU TO ALIGN YOURSELVES SO NEATLY--
--FOR A SINGLE SWIPE OF MY CUTTING BLADE!
X-MEN, I HAVE BEEN GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY TO REGAIN THE PLACE OF HONOR LOST TO THE CLAN YASHIDA--
--UNFORTUNATELY, IN ORDER TO ACCOMPLISH THIS GOAL--
--THE SILVER SAMURAI MUST KILL YOU ALL!
NEXT: THE SECRET OF PSYLOCKE REVEALED!
IN 30 DAYS! BE HERE!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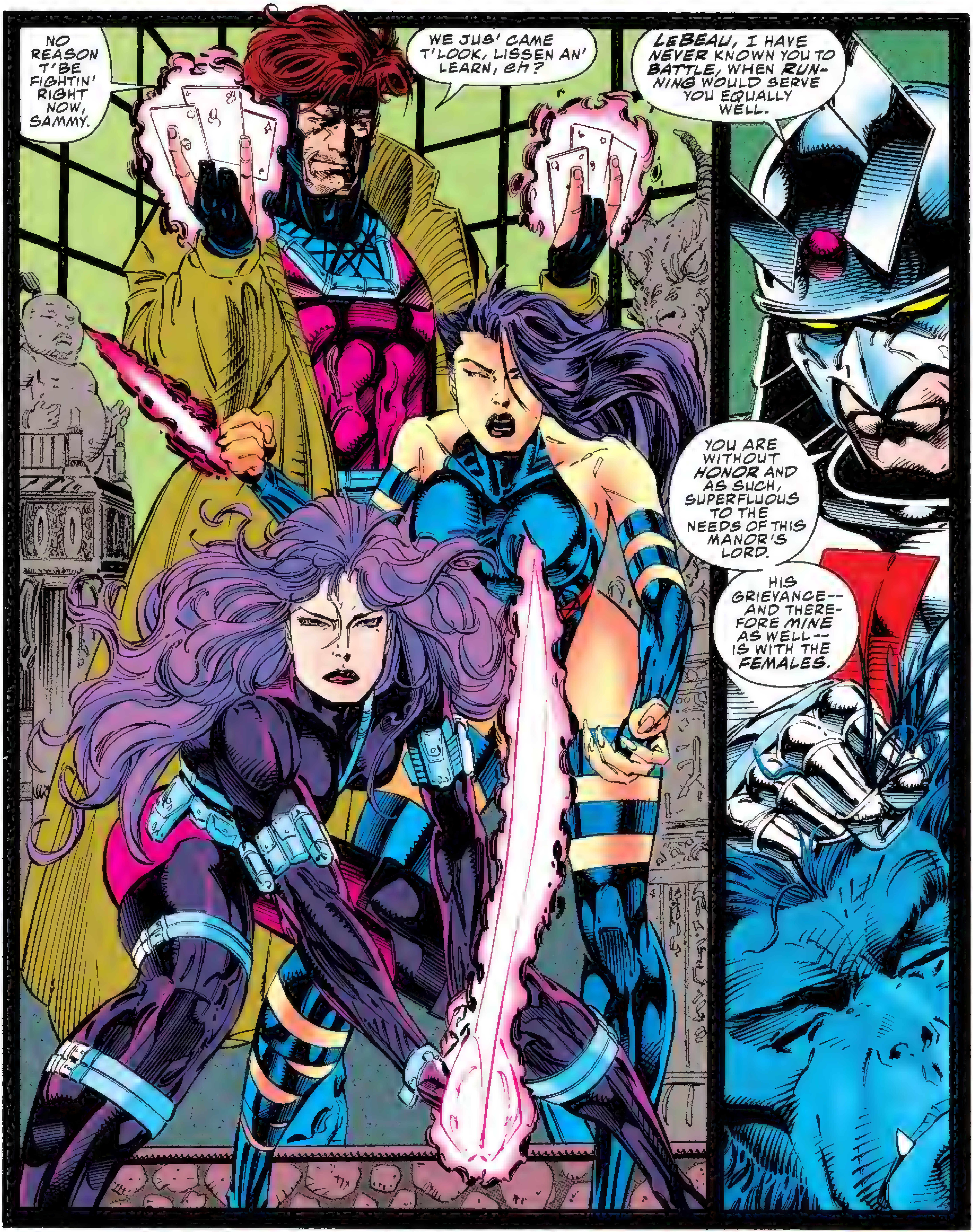

NO REASON T'BE FIGHTIN' RIGHT NOW, SAMMY.
WE JUS' CAME T'LOOK, LISSEN AN' LEARN, EH?
LEBEAU, I HAVE NEVER KNOWN YOU TO BATTLE, WHEN RUNNING WOULD SERVE YOU EQUALLY WELL.
YOU ARE WITHOUT HONOR AND AS SUCH, SUPERFLUOUS TO THE NEEDS OF THIS MANOR'S LORD.
HIS GRIEVANCE--AND THEREFORE MINE AS WELL--IS WITH THE FEMALES.

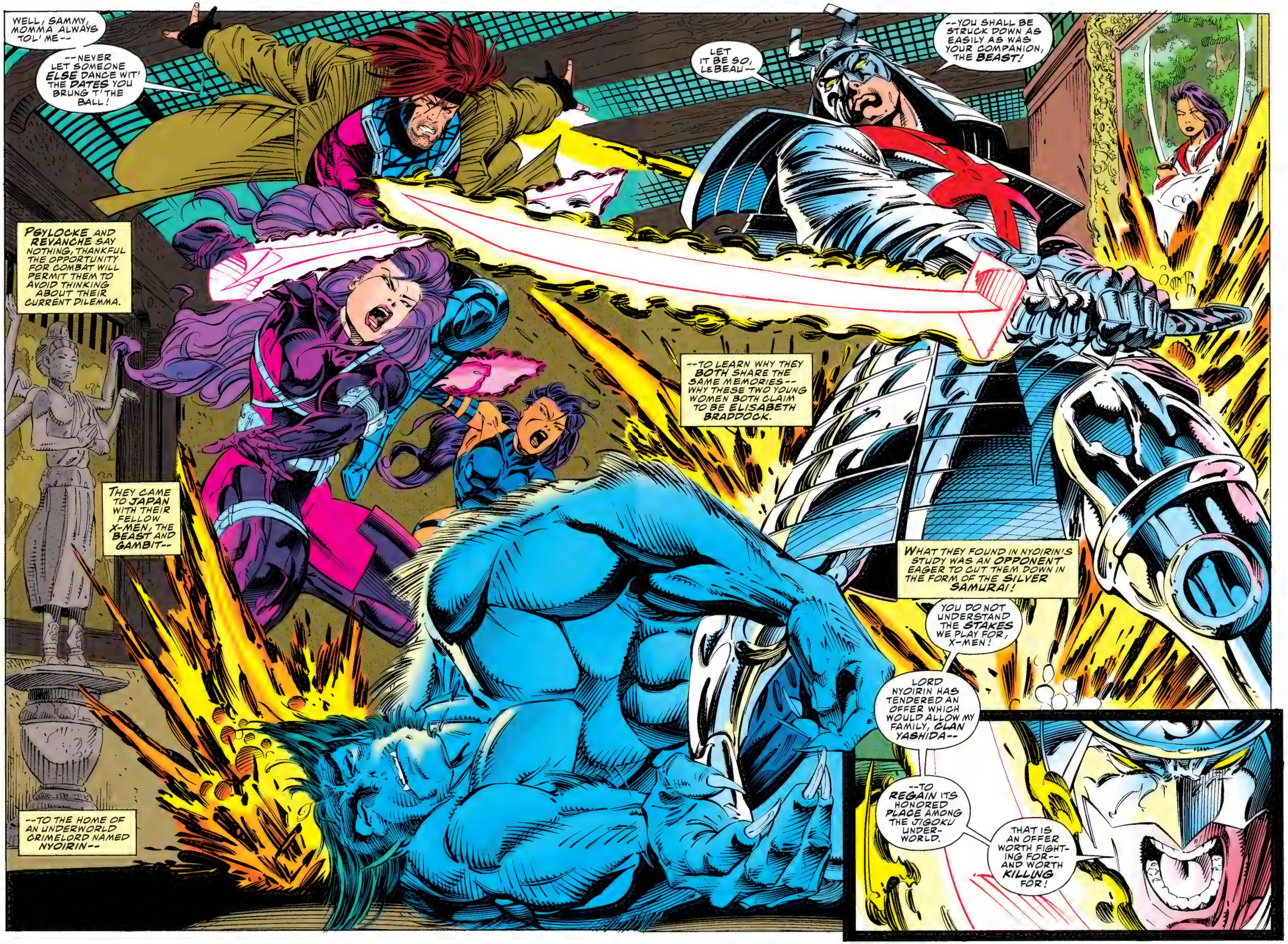
STAN LEE PRESENTS

The MASK behind the FACADE

A TALE OF TRUTHS AND LIES STARRING THE *X-MEN*

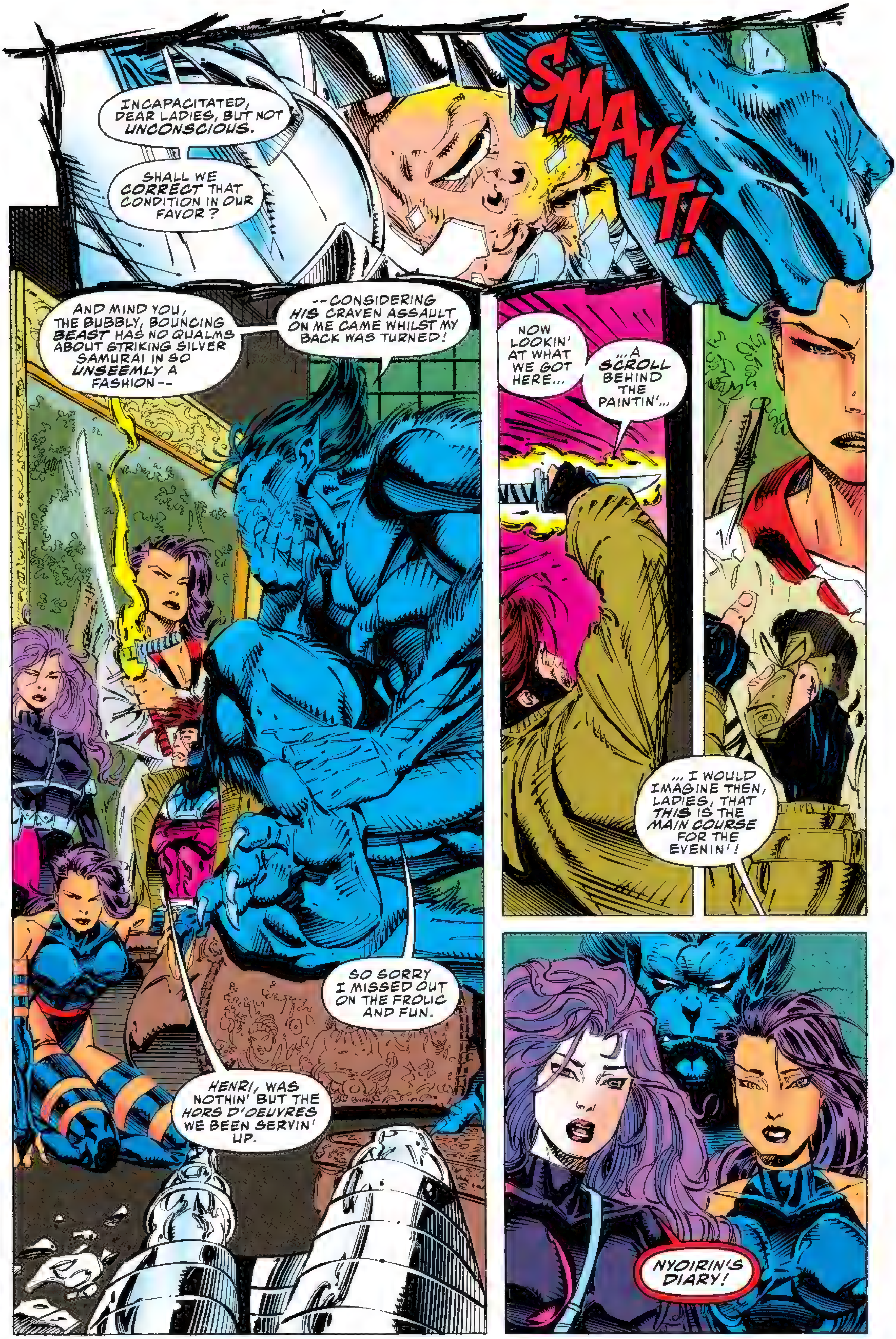
BY FABIAN NICIEZA AND ANDY KUBERT

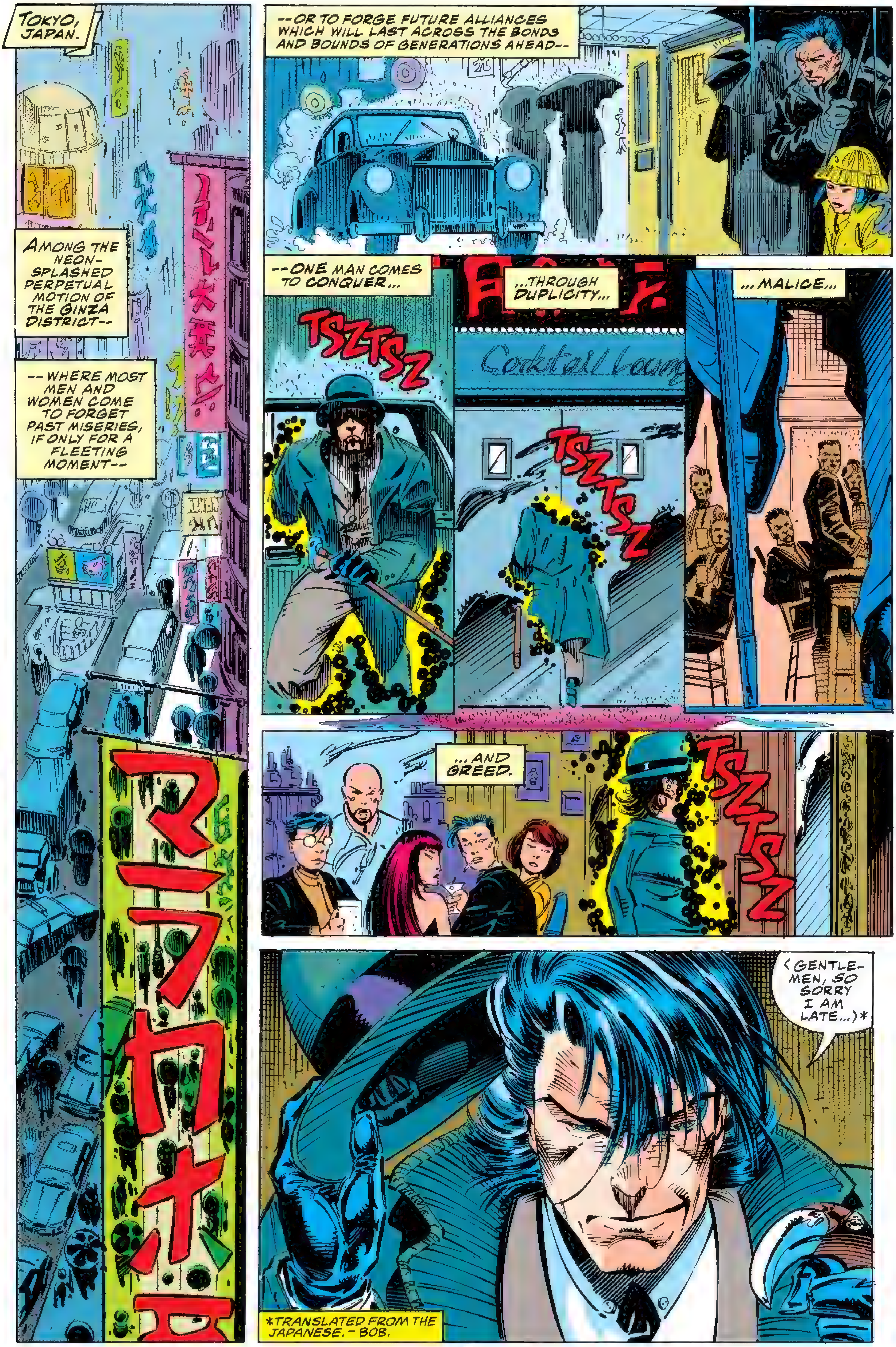
MARK PENNINGTON INKER • BILL OAKLEY LETTERER • JOE ROSAS COLORIST • BOB HARRAS EDITOR • TOM DEFALCO EDITOR IN CHIEF

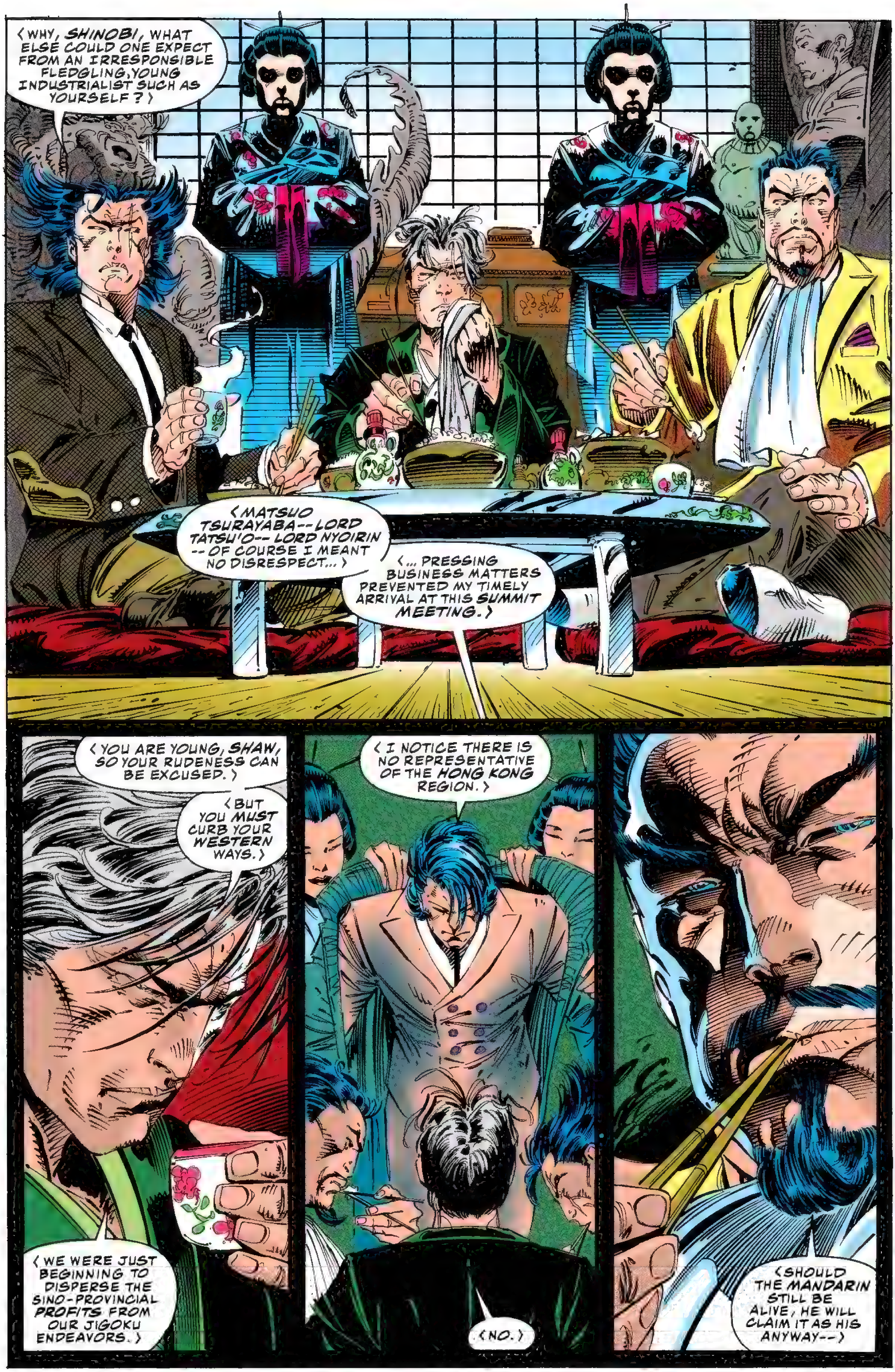

WELL, SAMMY, MOMMA ALWAYS TOL' ME--
--NEVER LET SOMEONE ELSE DANCE WIT' THE DATES YOU BRUNG T' THE BALL!
LET IT BE SO, LEBEAU--
--YOU SHALL BE STRUCK DOWN AS EASILY AS WAS YOUR COMPANION, THE BEAST!
PSYLOCKE AND REVANCHE SAY NOTHING, THANKFUL THE OPPORTUNITY FOR COMBAT WILL PERMIT THEM TO AVOID THINKING ABOUT THEIR CURRENT DILEMMA.
--TO LEARN WHY THEY BOTH SHARE THE SAME MEMORIES--WHY THESE TWO YOUNG WOMEN BOTH CLAIM TO BE ELISABETH BRADDOCK.
THEY CAME TO JAPAN WITH THEIR FELLOW X-MEN, THE BEAST AND GAMBIT--
--TO THE HOME OF AN UNDERWORLD CRIMELORD NAMED NYOIRIN--
WHAT THEY FOUND IN NYOIRIN'S STUDY WAS AN OPPONENT EAGER TO CUT THEM DOWN IN THE FORM OF THE SILVER SAMURAI!
YOU DO NOT UNDERSTAND THE STAKES WE PLAY FOR, X-MEN!
LORD NYOIRIN HAS TENDERED AN OFFER WHICH WOULD ALLOW MY FAMILY, CLAN YASHIDA--
--TO REGAIN ITS HONORED PLACE AMONG THE JIGOKU UNDER-WORLD.
THAT IS AN OFFER WORTH FIGHTING FOR--AND WORTH KILLING FOR!

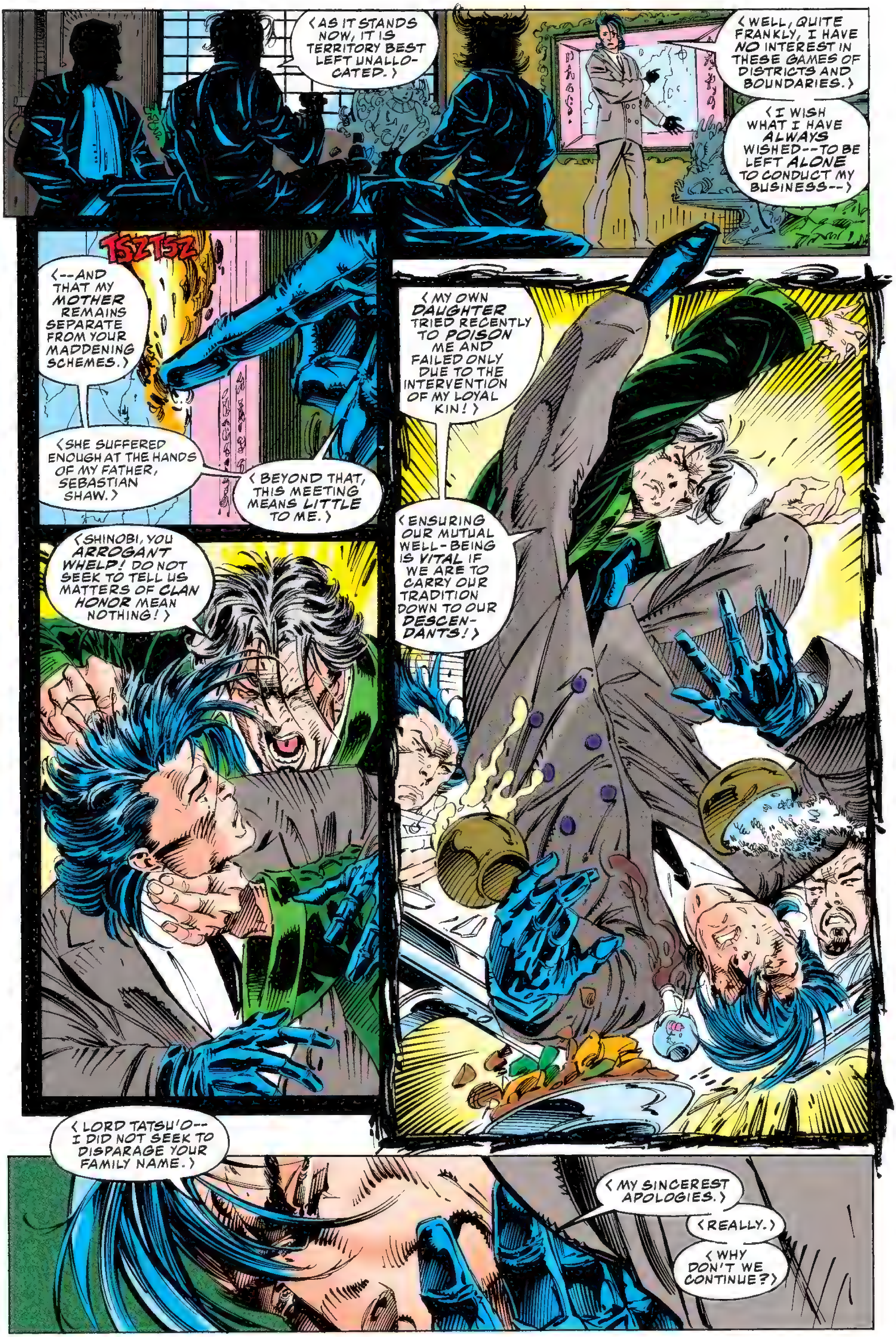
AS IF YOU'VE EVER NEEDED AN EXCUSE F'R THAT, KENUICHIO!
PARDON. COMIN' THROUGH.
SHTHAK!
SHOW DISRESPECT, GAIJIN--
--AND WHILE YOU DO--
--I WILL PIN YOUR FLAPPING TONGUE TO THE WALL!!
FSHEKT!
NOW NO NEED TO GET SURLY, MON BÊTE ENFANT!
THEN AGAIN, KENNY-BOY--
--YOUR AIM IS SIMPLY TOO IRONIC, N'EST-CE PAS?
FEW OF US WOULDN' MIND DOIN' THAT T' THE LITTLE LADY OURSELVES RIGHT 'BOUT NOW.

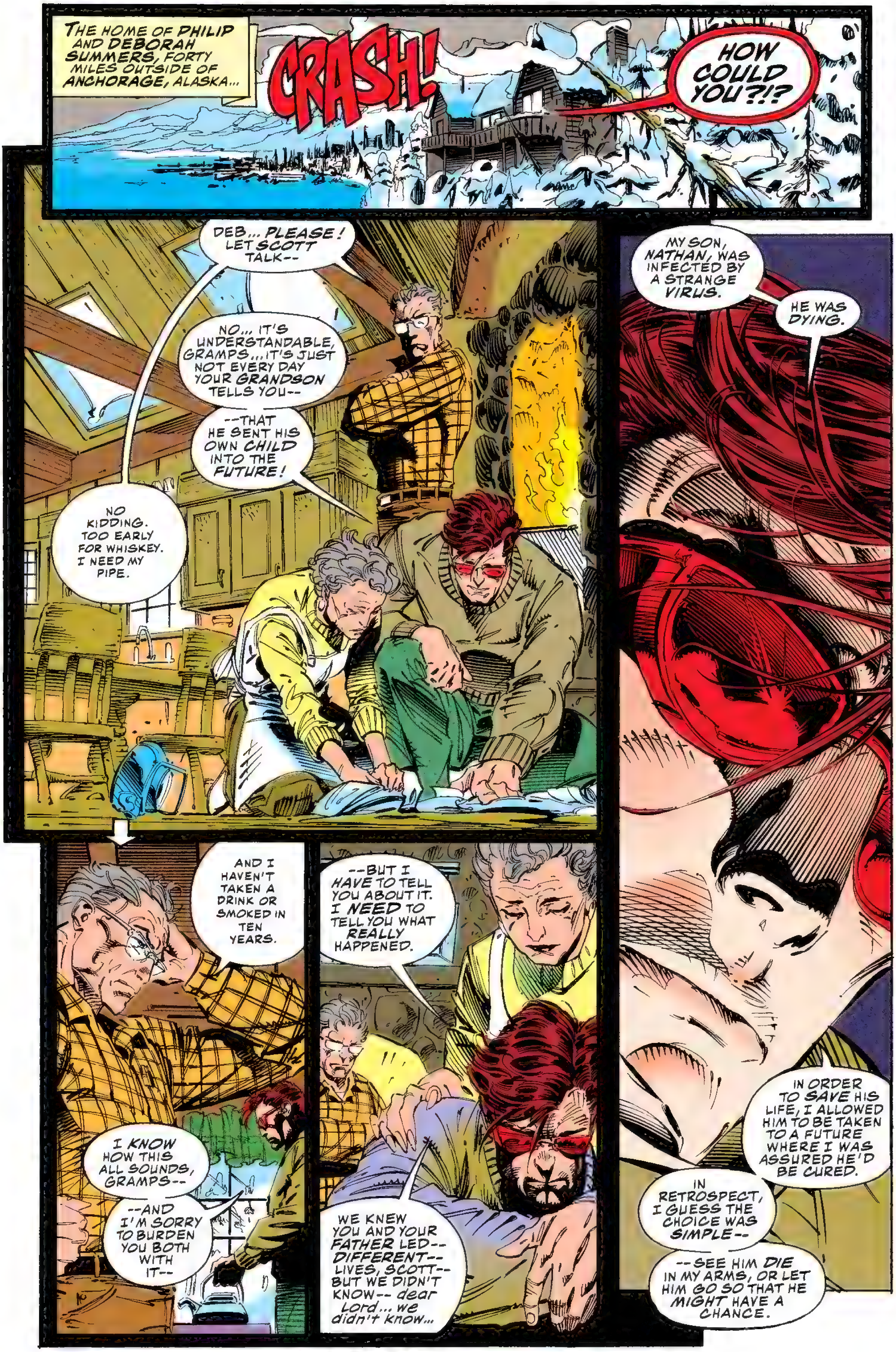
I'M ALMOST WISHING SILVER SAMURAI'S BLADE HAD FOUND ITS WAY TO YOUR *MOUTH*, GAMBIT!
HAVE I OFFENDED THE TWO OF YOU? FORGIVE ME, MES PETITES!
LET'S FINISH THIS!
A DOUBLE PARRY OF OUR *PSYCHIC* BLADES--
--SHOULD BE SUFFICIENT ENOUGH TO *SCRAMBLE* SAMURAI'S SYNAPTIC CONTROL--
SHFYEETHAK!
--AND WITH HIS STRINGS *CUT*, THE MARIONETTE *FALLS*--
--THE SHOW FINISHES, THE PUPPETEER'S CHARADE AN UNSUCCESSFUL ONE.

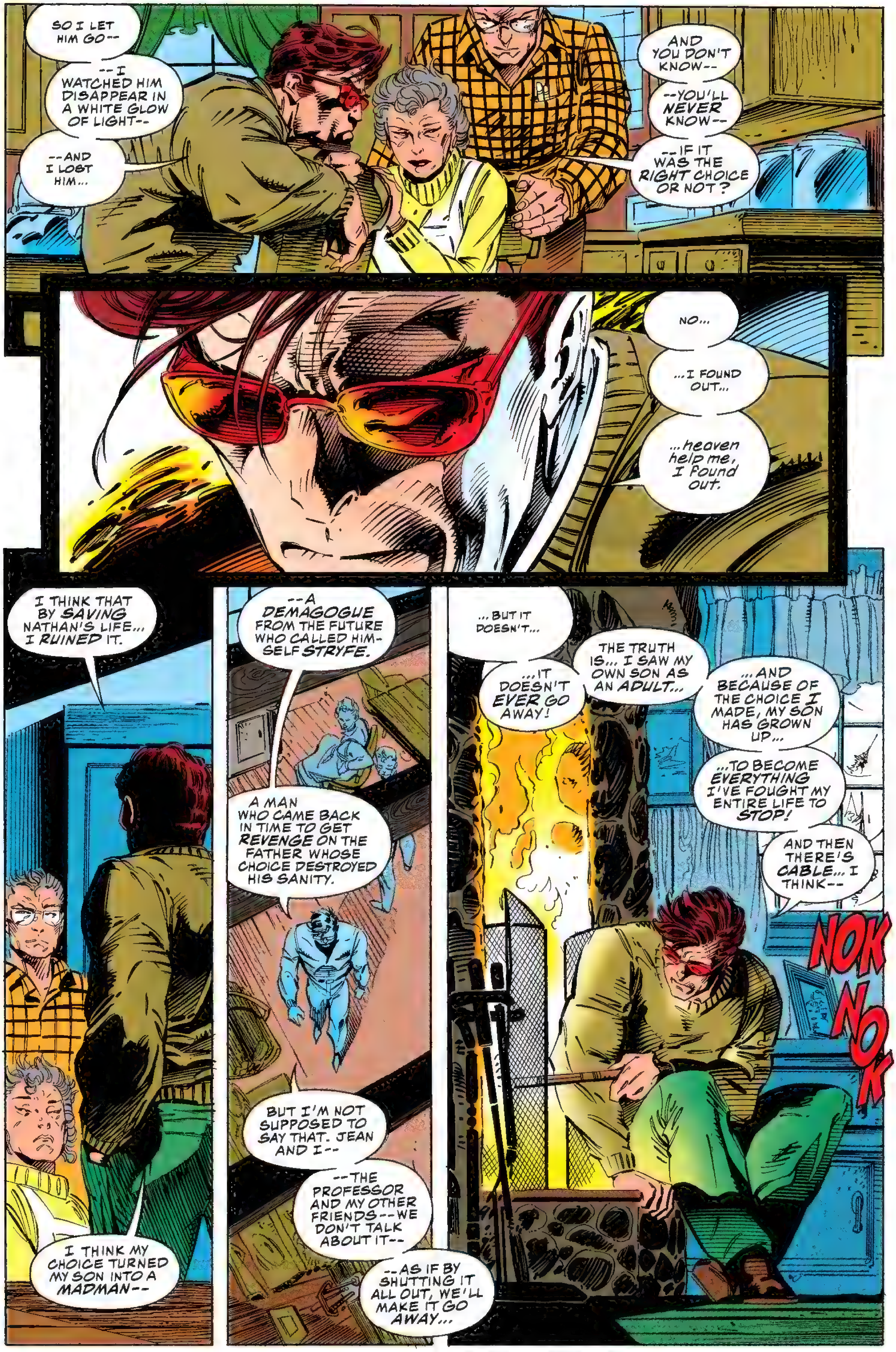

INCAPACITATED, DEAR LADIES, BUT NOT *UNCONSCIOUS.*
SHALL WE *CORRECT* THAT CONDITION IN OUR FAVOR?
SMAKT!
AND MIND YOU, THE BUBBLY, BOUNCING *BEAST* HAS NO QUALMS ABOUT STRIKING SILVER SAMURAI IN SO *UNSEEMLY* A FASHION--
--CONSIDERING *HIS* CRAVEN ASSAULT ON ME CAME WHILST MY BACK WAS TURNED!
SO SORRY I MISSED OUT ON THE FROLIC AND FUN.
HENRI, WAS NOTHIN' BUT THE *HORS D'OEUVRES* WE BEEN SERVIN' UP.
NOW LOOKIN' AT WHAT WE GOT HERE...
...A *SCROLL* BEHIND THE PAINTIN'...
...I WOULD IMAGINE THEN, LADIES, THAT *THIS* IS THE *MAIN COURSE* FOR THE EVENIN'!
NYOIRIN'S DIARY!

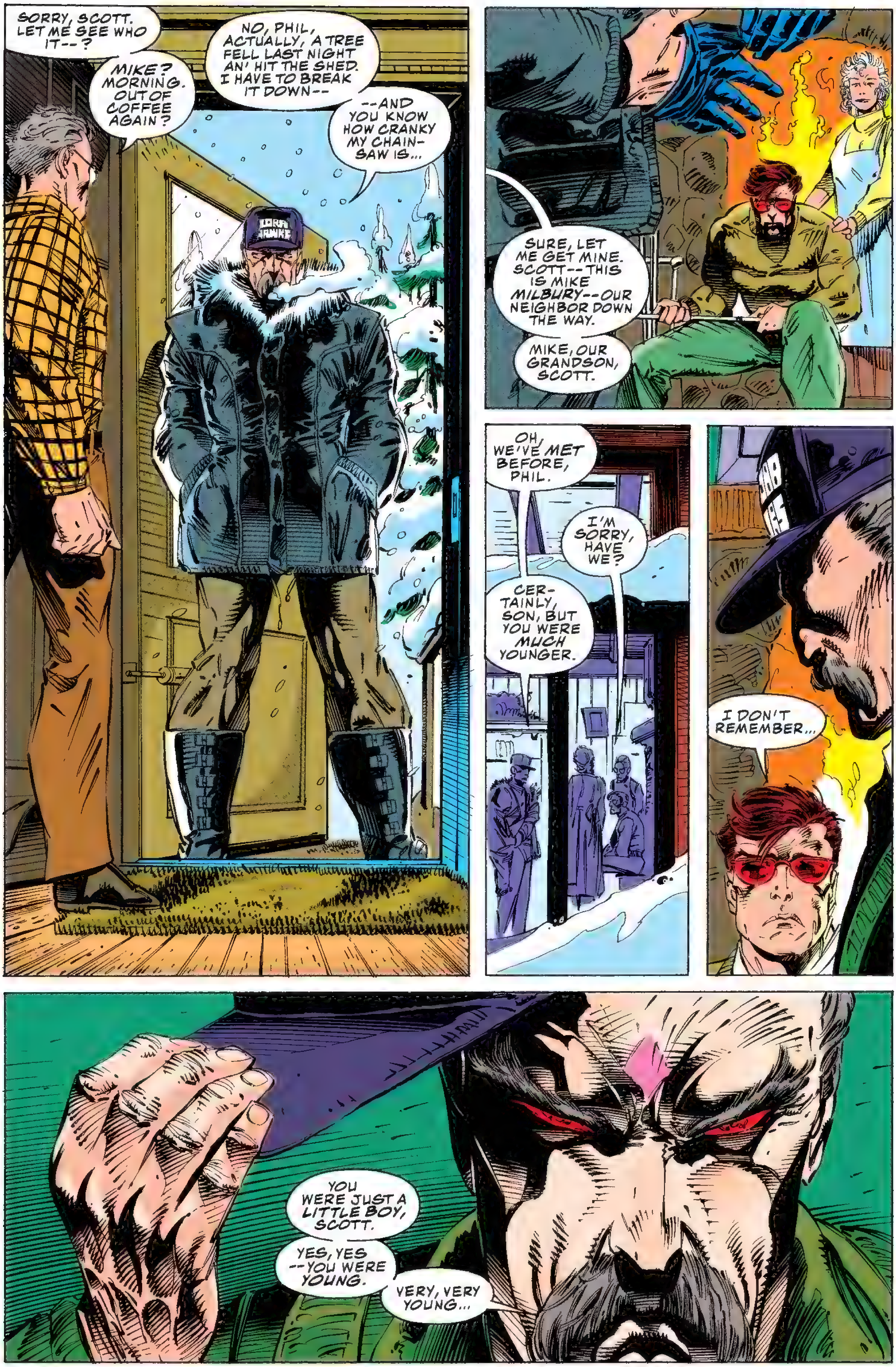

TOKYO, JAPAN.
AMONG THE NEON-SPLASHED PERPETUAL MOTION OF THE GINZA DISTRICT--
--WHERE MOST MEN AND WOMEN COME TO FORGET PAST MISERIES, IF ONLY FOR A FLEETING MOMENT--
--OR TO FORGE FUTURE ALLIANCES WHICH WILL LAST ACROSS THE BONDS AND BOUNDS OF GENERATIONS AHEAD--
--ONE MAN COMES TO CONQUER...
TSZTSZ
...THROUGH DUPLICITY...
Cocktail Loung
TSZTSZ
...MALICE...
...AND GREED.
TSZTSZ
‹GENTLEMEN, SO SORRY I AM LATE...›*
*TRANSLATED FROM THE JAPANESE. - BOB.

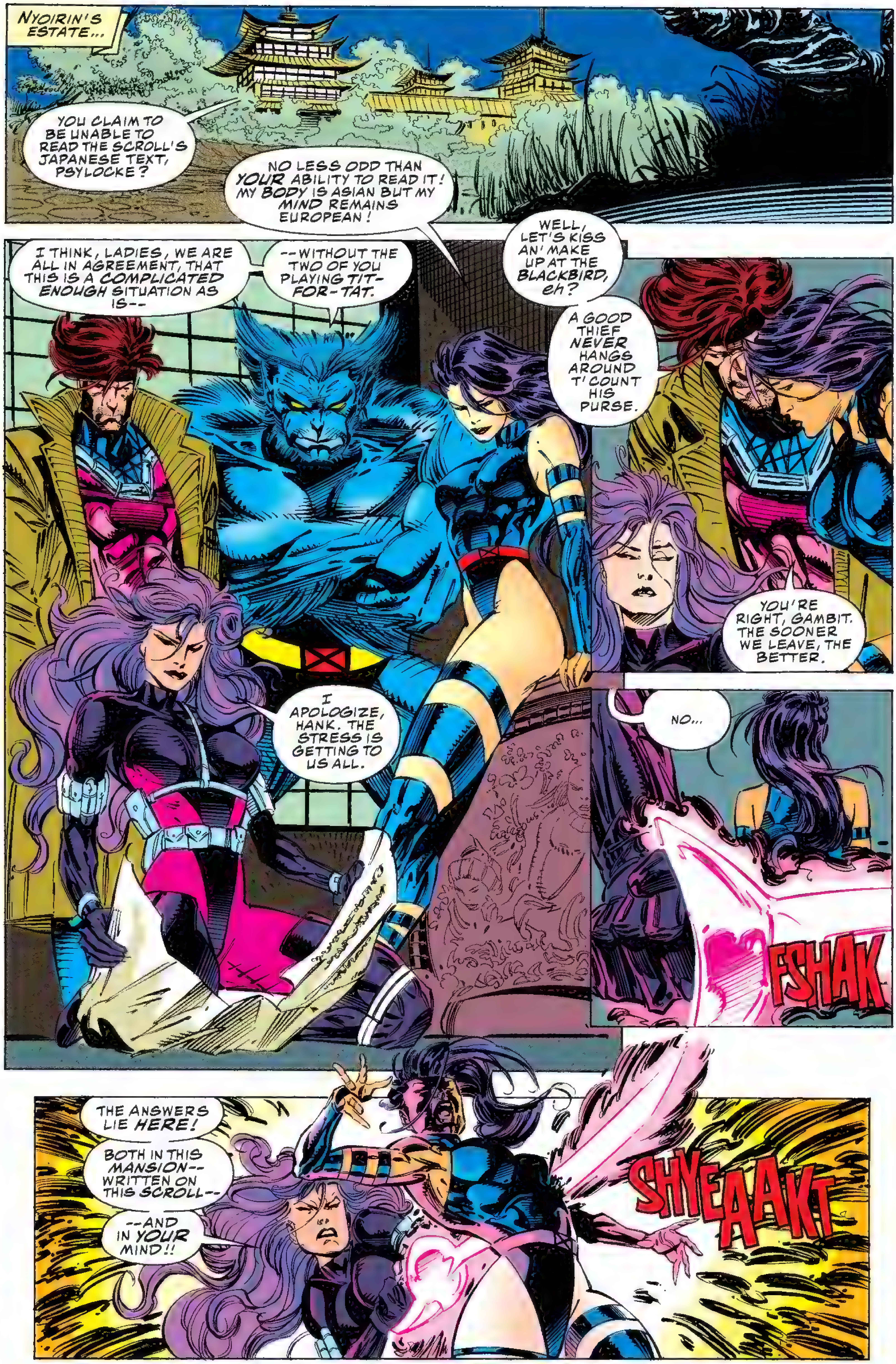

‹WHY, *SHINOBI*, WHAT ELSE COULD ONE EXPECT FROM AN IRRESPONSIBLE FLEDGLING, YOUNG INDUSTRIALIST SUCH AS YOURSELF?›
‹*MATSUO TSURAYABA--LORD TATSU'O--LORD NYOIRIN*--OF COURSE I MEANT NO DISRESPECT...›
‹...PRESSING BUSINESS MATTERS PREVENTED MY TIMELY ARRIVAL AT THIS *SUMMIT MEETING*.›
‹YOU ARE YOUNG, *SHAW*, SO YOUR RUDENESS CAN BE EXCUSED.›
‹BUT YOU *MUST* CURB YOUR *WESTERN* WAYS.›
‹WE WERE JUST BEGINNING TO DISPERSE THE SINO-PROVINCIAL *PROFITS* FROM OUR JIGOKU ENDEAVORS.›
‹I NOTICE THERE IS NO REPRESENTATIVE OF THE *HONG KONG* REGION.›
‹NO.›
‹SHOULD THE *MANDARIN* STILL BE ALIVE, HE WILL CLAIM IT AS HIS ANYWAY--›

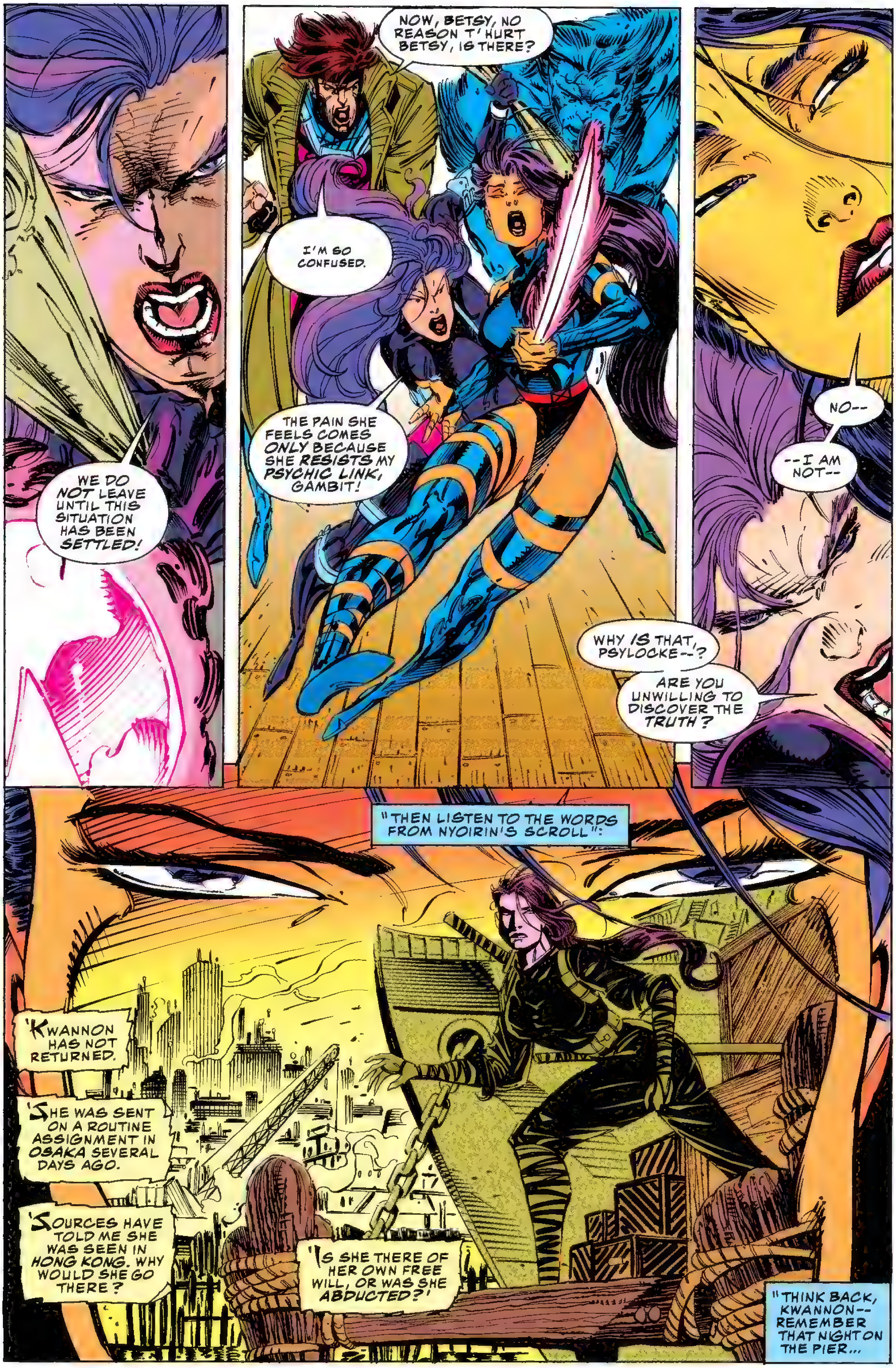

‹AS IT STANDS NOW, IT IS TERRITORY BEST LEFT UNALLOCATED.›
‹WELL, QUITE FRANKLY, I HAVE NO INTEREST IN THESE GAMES OF DISTRICTS AND BOUNDARIES.›
‹I WISH WHAT I HAVE ALWAYS WISHED--TO BE LEFT ALONE TO CONDUCT MY BUSINESS--›
TSZTSZ
‹--AND THAT MY MOTHER REMAINS SEPARATE FROM YOUR MADDENING SCHEMES.›
‹SHE SUFFERED ENOUGH AT THE HANDS OF MY FATHER, SEBASTIAN SHAW.›
‹BEYOND THAT, THIS MEETING MEANS LITTLE TO ME.›
‹MY OWN DAUGHTER TRIED RECENTLY TO POISON ME AND FAILED ONLY DUE TO THE INTERVENTION OF MY LOYAL KIN!›
‹ENSURING OUR MUTUAL WELL-BEING IS VITAL IF WE ARE TO CARRY OUR TRADITION DOWN TO OUR DESCENDANTS!›
‹SHINOBI, YOU ARROGANT WHELP! DO NOT SEEK TO TELL US MATTERS OF CLAN HONOR MEAN NOTHING!›
‹LORD TATSU'O-- I DID NOT SEEK TO DISPARAGE YOUR FAMILY NAME.›
‹MY SINCEREST APOLOGIES.›
‹REALLY.›
‹WHY DON'T WE CONTINUE?›

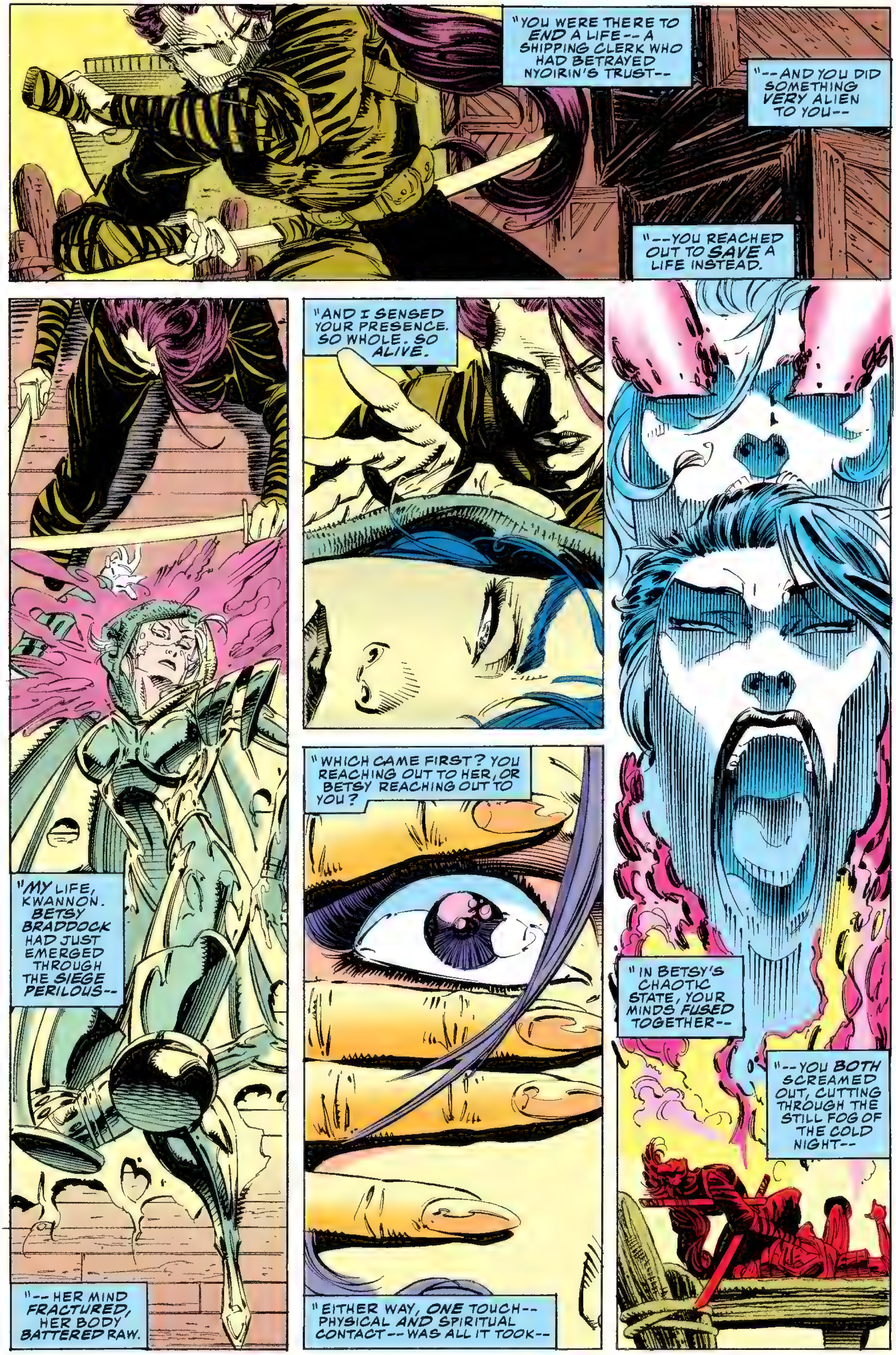

THE HOME OF PHILIP AND DEBORAH SUMMERS, FORTY MILES OUTSIDE OF ANCHORAGE, ALASKA...
CRASH!
HOW COULD YOU?!?
DEB... PLEASE! LET SCOTT TALK--
NO... IT'S UNDERSTANDABLE, GRAMPS... IT'S JUST NOT EVERY DAY YOUR GRANDSON TELLS YOU--
--THAT HE SENT HIS OWN CHILD INTO THE FUTURE!
NO KIDDING. TOO EARLY FOR WHISKEY. I NEED MY PIPE.
AND I HAVEN'T TAKEN A DRINK OR SMOKED IN TEN YEARS.
I KNOW HOW THIS ALL SOUNDS, GRAMPS--
--AND I'M SORRY TO BURDEN YOU BOTH WITH IT--
--BUT I HAVE TO TELL YOU ABOUT IT. I NEED TO TELL YOU WHAT REALLY HAPPENED.
WE KNEW YOU AND YOUR FATHER LED-- DIFFERENT-- LIVES, SCOTT-- BUT WE DIDN'T KNOW-- dear Lord... we didn't know...
MY SON, NATHAN, WAS INFECTED BY A STRANGE VIRUS.
HE WAS DYING.
IN ORDER TO SAVE HIS LIFE, I ALLOWED HIM TO BE TAKEN TO A FUTURE WHERE I WAS ASSURED HE'D BE CURED.
IN RETROSPECT, I GUESS THE CHOICE WAS SIMPLE--
--SEE HIM DIE IN MY ARMS, OR LET HIM GO SO THAT HE MIGHT HAVE A CHANCE.

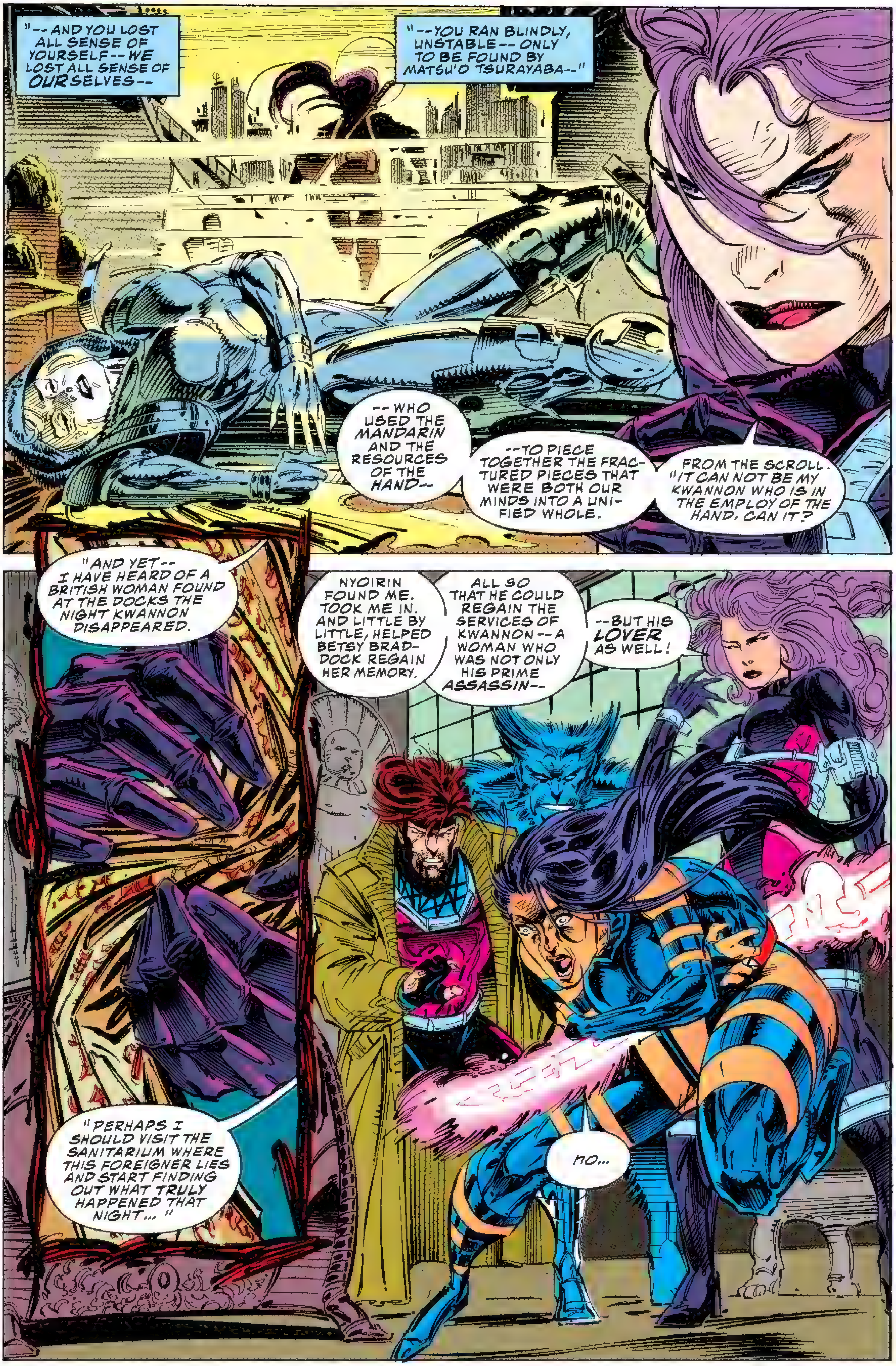

SO I LET HIM GO--
--I WATCHED HIM DISAPPEAR IN A WHITE GLOW OF LIGHT--
--AND I LOST HIM...
AND YOU DON'T KNOW--
--YOU'LL NEVER KNOW--
--IF IT WAS THE RIGHT CHOICE OR NOT?
NO...
...I FOUND OUT...
...heaven help me, I found out.
I THINK THAT BY SAVING NATHAN'S LIFE... I RUINED IT.
I THINK MY CHOICE TURNED MY SON INTO A MADMAN--
--A DEMAGOGUE FROM THE FUTURE WHO CALLED HIMSELF STRYFE.
A MAN WHO CAME BACK IN TIME TO GET REVENGE ON THE FATHER WHOSE CHOICE DESTROYED HIS SANITY.
BUT I'M NOT SUPPOSED TO SAY THAT. JEAN AND I--
--THE PROFESSOR AND MY OTHER FRIENDS--WE DON'T TALK ABOUT IT--
--AS IF BY SHUTTING IT ALL OUT, WE'LL MAKE IT GO AWAY...
...BUT IT DOESN'T...
...IT DOESN'T EVER GO AWAY!
THE TRUTH IS... I SAW MY OWN SON AS AN ADULT...
...AND BECAUSE OF THE CHOICE I MADE, MY SON HAS GROWN UP...
...TO BECOME EVERYTHING I'VE FOUGHT MY ENTIRE LIFE TO STOP!
AND THEN THERE'S CABLE... I THINK--
NOK NOK

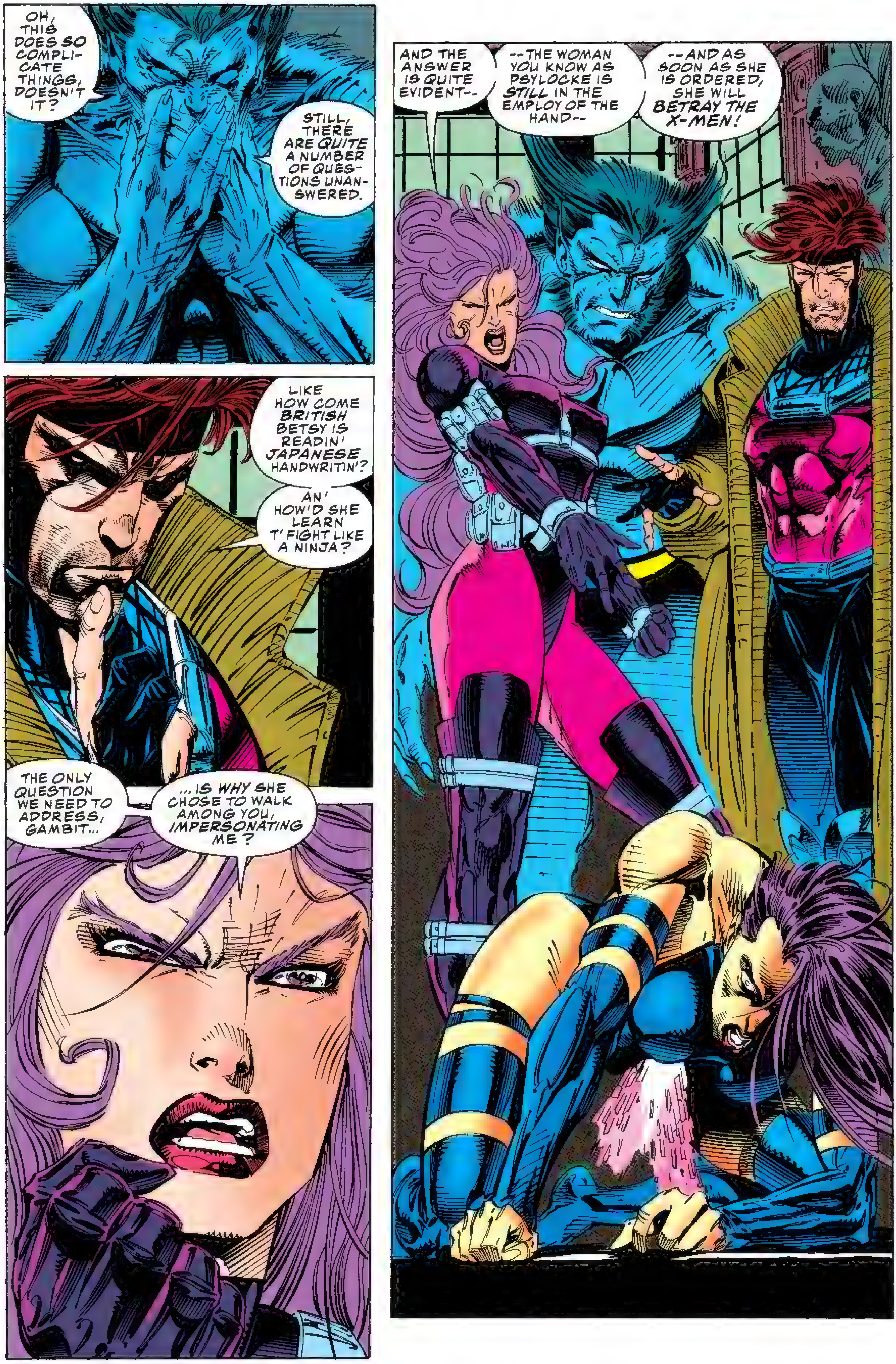

SORRY, SCOTT. LET ME SEE WHO IT-- ?
MIKE? MORNING. OUT OF COFFEE AGAIN?
NO, PHIL, ACTUALLY, A TREE FELL LAST NIGHT AN' HIT THE SHED. I HAVE TO BREAK IT DOWN--
--AND YOU KNOW HOW CRANKY MY CHAIN-SAW IS...
SURE, LET ME GET MINE. SCOTT--THIS IS MIKE MILBURY--OUR NEIGHBOR DOWN THE WAY.
MIKE, OUR GRANDSON, SCOTT.
OH, WE'VE MET BEFORE, PHIL.
I'M SORRY, HAVE WE?
CERTAINLY, SON, BUT YOU WERE MUCH YOUNGER.
I DON'T REMEMBER...
YOU WERE JUST A LITTLE BOY, SCOTT.
YES, YES --YOU WERE YOUNG.
VERY, VERY YOUNG...

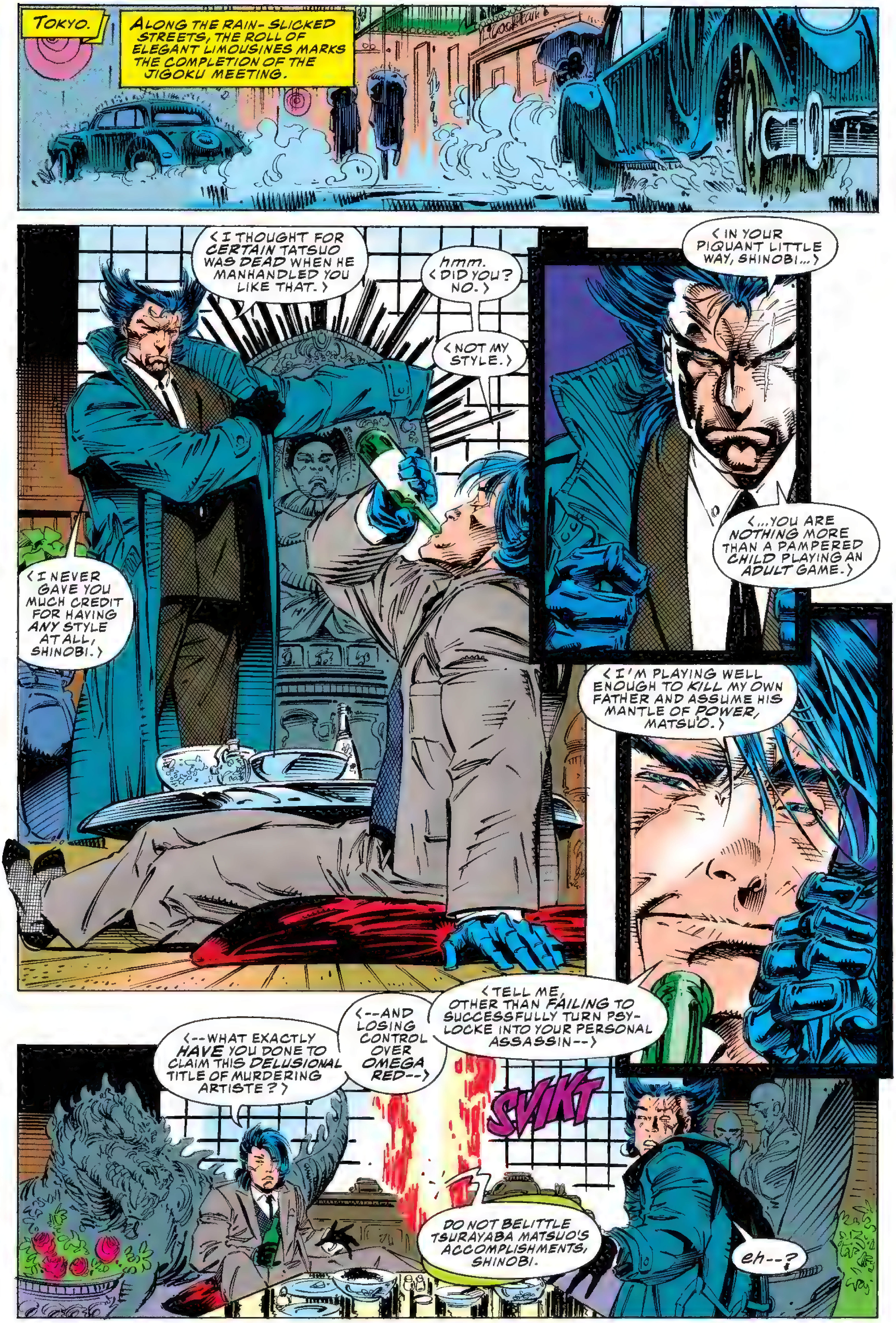

NYOIRIN'S ESTATE...
YOU CLAIM TO BE UNABLE TO READ THE SCROLL'S JAPANESE TEXT, PSYLOCKE?
NO LESS ODD THAN *YOUR* ABILITY TO READ IT! MY *BODY* IS ASIAN BUT MY *MIND* REMAINS EUROPEAN!
I THINK, LADIES, WE ARE ALL IN AGREEMENT, THAT THIS IS A *COMPLICATED ENOUGH* SITUATION AS IS--
--WITHOUT THE TWO OF YOU PLAYING *TIT-FOR-TAT.*
WELL, LET'S KISS AN' MAKE UP AT THE *BLACKBIRD,* *eh?*
A GOOD THIEF *NEVER* HANGS AROUND T' COUNT HIS PURSE.
I APOLOGIZE, HANK. THE STRESS IS GETTING TO US ALL.
YOU'RE RIGHT, GAMBIT. THE SOONER WE LEAVE, THE BETTER.
NO...
FSHAK
THE ANSWERS LIE *HERE!*
BOTH IN THIS *MANSION*-- WRITTEN ON THIS *SCROLL*--
--AND IN *YOUR* MIND!!
SHYEAAKT

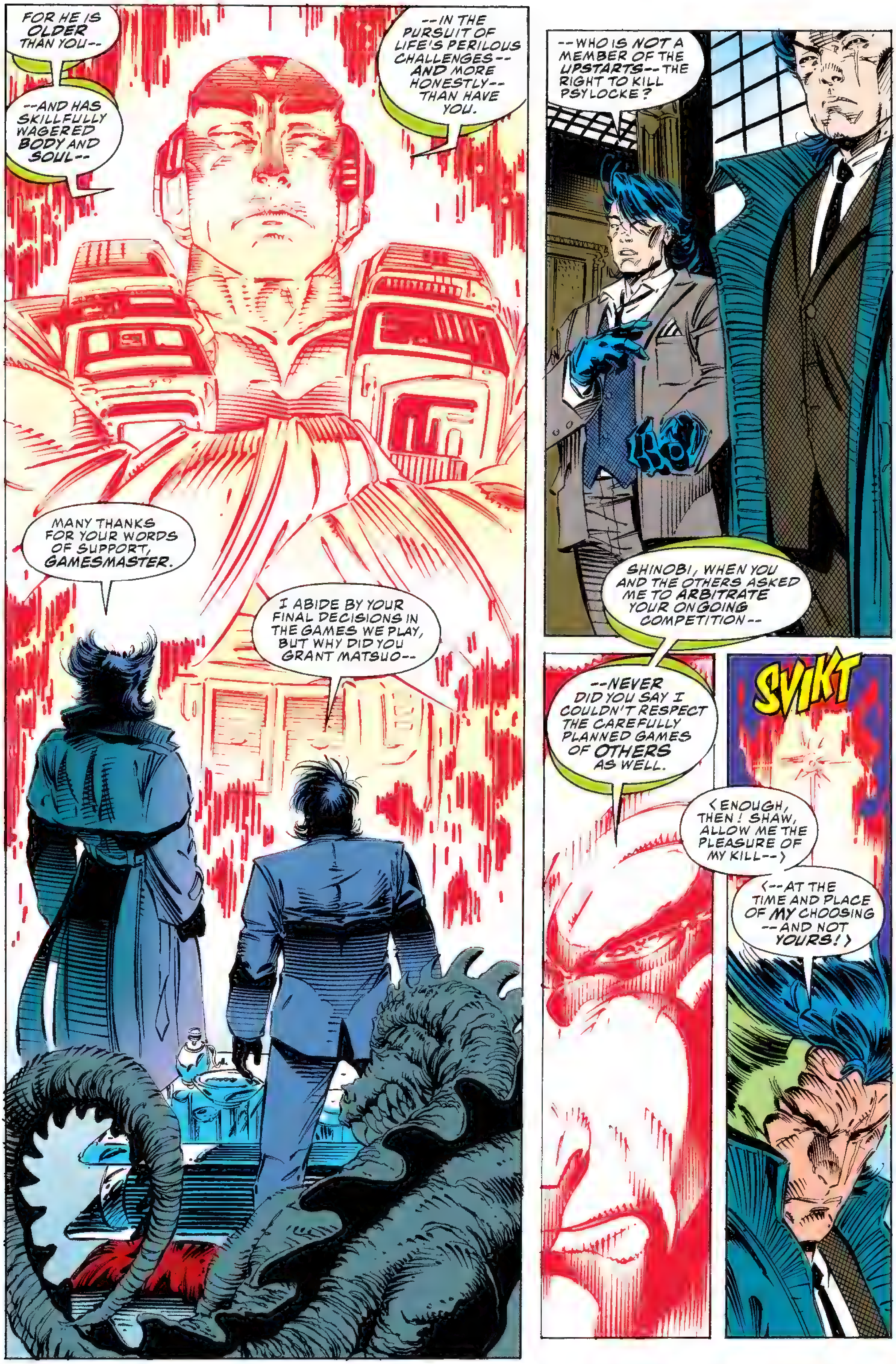

WE DO *NOT* LEAVE UNTIL THIS SITUATION HAS BEEN *SETTLED!*
NOW, BETSY, NO REASON T' HURT BETSY, IS THERE?
I'M SO CONFUSED.
THE PAIN SHE FEELS COMES *ONLY* BECAUSE SHE *RESISTS* MY *PSYCHIC LINK,* GAMBIT!
NO--
--I AM NOT--
WHY *IS* THAT, PSYLOCKE--?
ARE YOU UNWILLING TO DISCOVER THE *TRUTH?*
"THEN LISTEN TO THE WORDS FROM NYOIRIN'S SCROLL":
'KWANNON HAS NOT RETURNED.
'SHE WAS SENT ON A ROUTINE ASSIGNMENT IN *OSAKA* SEVERAL DAYS AGO.
'SOURCES HAVE TOLD ME SHE WAS SEEN IN *HONG KONG.* WHY WOULD SHE GO THERE?
'IS SHE THERE OF HER OWN FREE WILL, OR WAS SHE *ABDUCTED?*'
"THINK BACK, KWANNON-- REMEMBER THAT NIGHT ON THE PIER...


"YOU WERE THERE TO *END* A LIFE -- A SHIPPING CLERK WHO HAD BETRAYED NYOIRIN'S TRUST--
"--AND YOU DID SOMETHING *VERY ALIEN* TO YOU--
"--YOU REACHED OUT TO *SAVE* A LIFE INSTEAD.
"*MY* LIFE, KWANNON. *BETSY BRADDOCK* HAD JUST EMERGED THROUGH THE *SIEGE PERILOUS*--
"-- HER MIND *FRACTURED,* HER BODY *BATTERED* RAW.
"AND I SENSED YOUR PRESENCE. SO WHOLE. SO *ALIVE.*
"WHICH CAME FIRST? YOU REACHING OUT TO HER, OR BETSY REACHING OUT TO YOU?
"EITHER WAY, *ONE* TOUCH-- PHYSICAL *AND* SPIRITUAL CONTACT -- WAS ALL IT TOOK--
"IN BETSY'S CHAOTIC STATE, YOUR MINDS *FUSED* TOGETHER--
"--YOU *BOTH* SCREAMED OUT, CUTTING THROUGH THE STILL FOG OF THE COLD NIGHT--

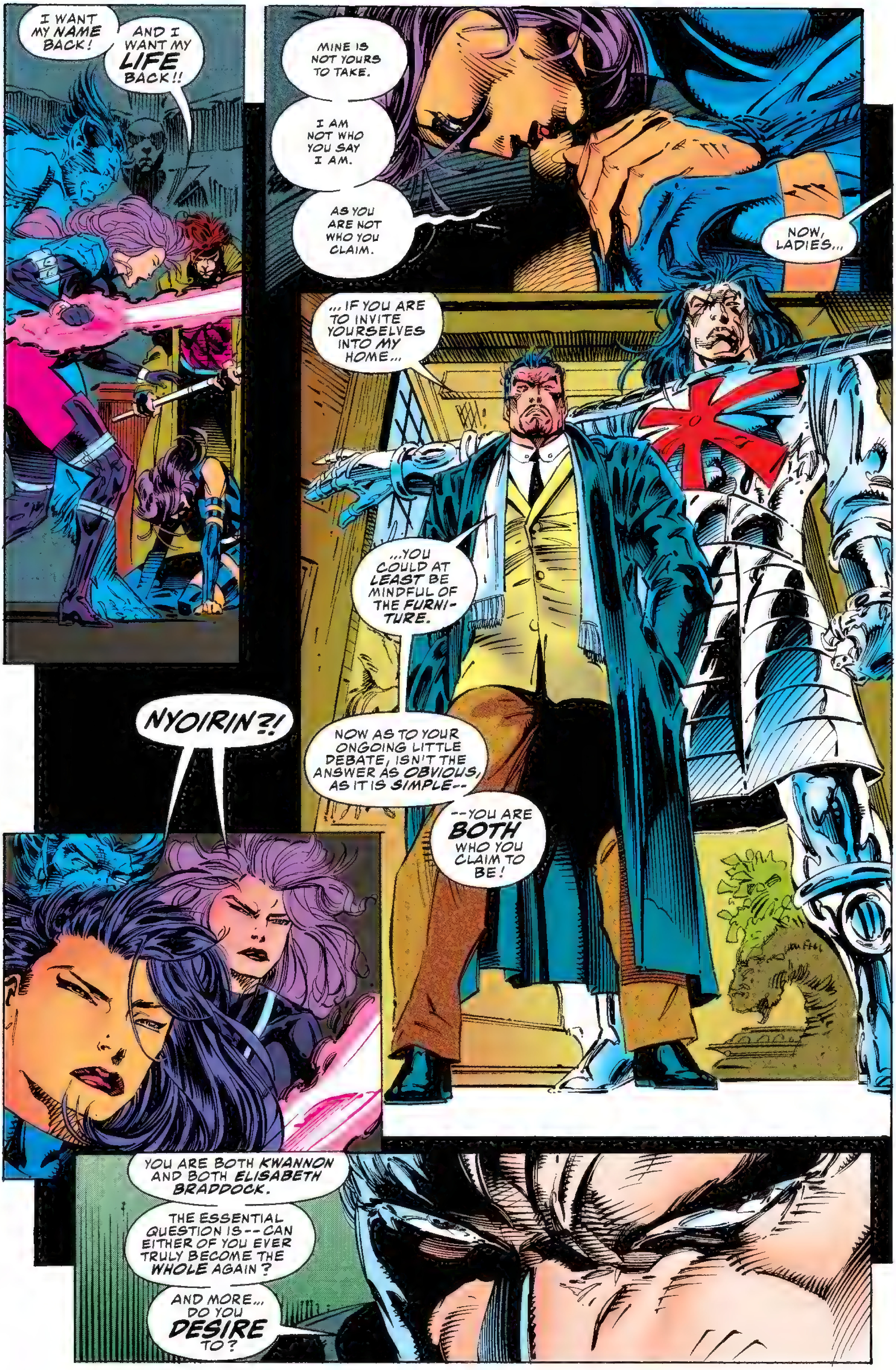

"--AND YOU LOST ALL SENSE OF YOURSELF--WE LOST ALL SENSE OF OUR SELVES--
"--YOU RAN BLINDLY, UNSTABLE--ONLY TO BE FOUND BY MATSU'O TSURAYABA--"
--WHO USED THE MANDARIN AND THE RESOURCES OF THE HAND--
--TO PIECE TOGETHER THE FRACTURED PIECES THAT WERE BOTH OUR MINDS INTO A UNIFIED WHOLE.
FROM THE SCROLL. "IT CAN NOT BE MY KWANNON WHO IS IN THE EMPLOY OF THE HAND, CAN IT?
"AND YET--I HAVE HEARD OF A BRITISH WOMAN FOUND AT THE DOCKS THE NIGHT KWANNON DISAPPEARED.
NYOIRIN FOUND ME. TOOK ME IN. AND LITTLE BY LITTLE, HELPED BETSY BRADDOCK REGAIN HER MEMORY.
ALL SO THAT HE COULD REGAIN THE SERVICES OF KWANNON--A WOMAN WHO WAS NOT ONLY HIS PRIME ASSASSIN--
--BUT HIS LOVER AS WELL!
"PERHAPS I SHOULD VISIT THE SANITARIUM WHERE THIS FOREIGNER LIES AND START FINDING OUT WHAT TRULY HAPPENED THAT NIGHT..."
no...

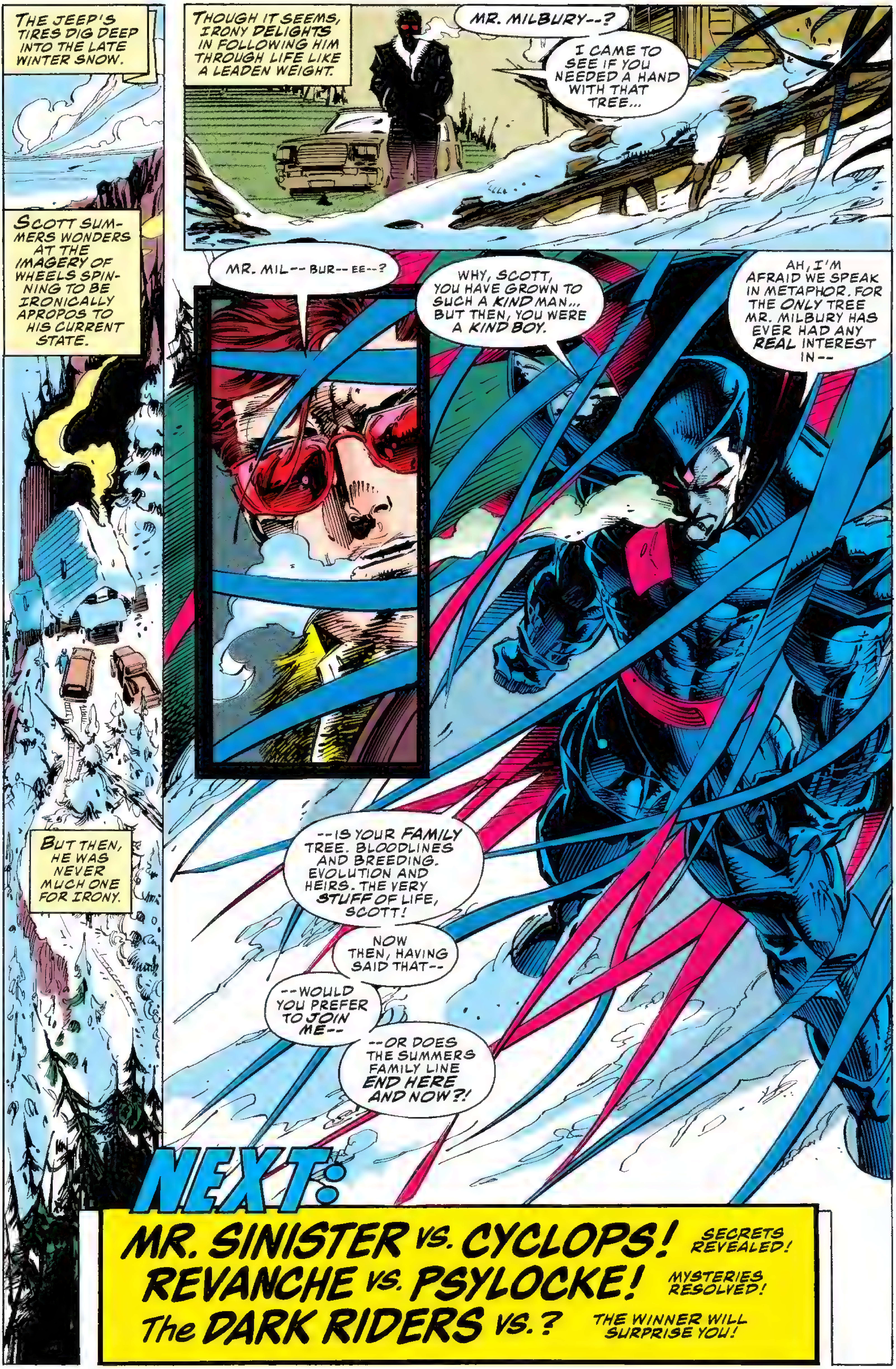

OH, THIS DOES SO COMPLICATE THINGS, DOESN'T IT?
STILL, THERE ARE *QUITE* A NUMBER OF QUESTIONS UNANSWERED.
LIKE HOW COME *BRITISH* BETSY IS READIN' *JAPANESE* HANDWRITIN'?
AN' HOW'D SHE LEARN T' FIGHT LIKE A NINJA?
THE ONLY QUESTION WE NEED TO ADDRESS, GAMBIT...
...IS *WHY* SHE CHOSE TO WALK AMONG YOU, *IMPERSONATING* ME?
AND THE ANSWER IS QUITE EVIDENT--
--THE WOMAN YOU KNOW AS PSYLOCKE IS *STILL* IN THE EMPLOY OF THE HAND--
--AND AS SOON AS SHE IS ORDERED, SHE WILL **BETRAY THE X-MEN!**

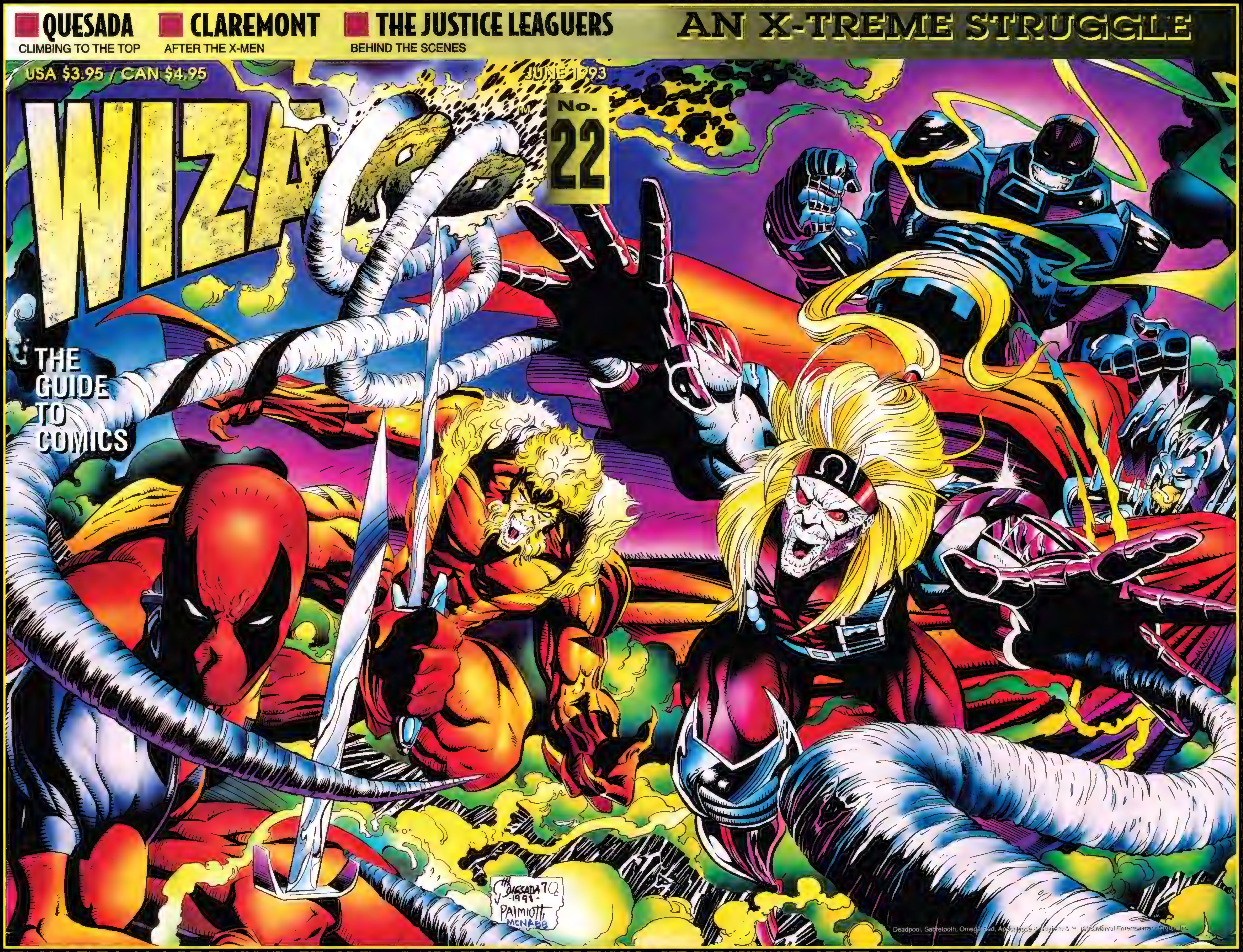

TOKYO.
ALONG THE RAIN-SLICKED STREETS, THE ROLL OF ELEGANT LIMOUSINES MARKS THE COMPLETION OF THE JIGOKU MEETING.
‹I THOUGHT FOR CERTAIN TATSUO WAS DEAD WHEN HE MANHANDLED YOU LIKE THAT.›
hmm. ‹DID YOU? NO.›
‹NOT MY STYLE.›
‹I NEVER GAVE YOU MUCH CREDIT FOR HAVING ANY STYLE AT ALL, SHINOBI.›
‹IN YOUR PIQUANT LITTLE WAY, SHINOBI...›
‹...YOU ARE NOTHING MORE THAN A PAMPERED CHILD PLAYING AN ADULT GAME.›
‹I'M PLAYING WELL ENOUGH TO KILL MY OWN FATHER AND ASSUME HIS MANTLE OF POWER, MATSUO.›
‹TELL ME, OTHER THAN FAILING TO SUCCESSFULLY TURN PSYLOCKE INTO YOUR PERSONAL ASSASSIN--›
‹--AND LOSING CONTROL OVER OMEGA RED--›
‹--WHAT EXACTLY HAVE YOU DONE TO CLAIM THIS DELUSIONAL TITLE OF MURDERING ARTISTE?›
SNIKT
DO NOT BELITTLE TSURAYABA MATSUO'S ACCOMPLISHMENTS, SHINOBI.
eh--?


FOR HE IS OLDER THAN YOU--
--AND HAS SKILLFULLY WAGERED BODY AND SOUL--
--IN THE PURSUIT OF LIFE'S PERILOUS CHALLENGES-- AND MORE HONESTLY-- THAN HAVE YOU.
MANY THANKS FOR YOUR WORDS OF SUPPORT, GAMESMASTER.
I ABIDE BY YOUR FINAL DECISIONS IN THE GAMES WE PLAY, BUT WHY DID YOU GRANT MATSUO--
--WHO IS NOT A MEMBER OF THE UPSTARTS-- THE RIGHT TO KILL PSYLOCKE?
SHINOBI, WHEN YOU AND THE OTHERS ASKED ME TO ARBITRATE YOUR ONGOING COMPETITION--
--NEVER DID YOU SAY I COULDN'T RESPECT THE CAREFULLY PLANNED GAMES OF OTHERS AS WELL.
SVIKT
<ENOUGH, THEN! SHAW, ALLOW ME THE PLEASURE OF MY KILL-->
<--AT THE TIME AND PLACE OF MY CHOOSING --AND NOT YOURS!>

"<FOR WHEN ALL IS SAID AND DONE-->
"<--THE TRUE NATURE OF THIS LUMP OF CLAY I HAVE SCULPTED INTO A TWISTED, FRAGILE, KILLING FLOWER-->
"<--WILL BLOSSOM TO SURPRISE AND DELIGHT YOU ALL-->
I WILL NOT STAND FOR ANY MORE OF HER LIES!
"<--MOST ESPECIALLY KWANNON AND ELISABETH BRADDOCK!>"
Oy vey, HERE WE GO...
SO STUBBORN, I'LL PROB'LY BREAK MY STAFF 'FORE I BREAK YOAH SKULL!
YOU'D DO WELL TO CONTROL YOURSELF AS WELL, ELISABETH--
--BECAUSE YOU HAVE INSTIGATED AS MUCH AS SHE HAS AGITATED!
BUT, HANK--I WANT MY HONOR BACK!


I WANT MY NAME BACK!
AND I WANT MY LIFE BACK!!
MINE IS NOT YOURS TO TAKE.
I AM NOT WHO YOU SAY I AM.
AS YOU ARE NOT WHO YOU CLAIM.
NOW, LADIES...
...IF YOU ARE TO INVITE YOURSELVES INTO MY HOME...
...YOU COULD AT LEAST BE MINDFUL OF THE FURNITURE.
NYOIRIN?!
NOW AS TO YOUR ONGOING LITTLE DEBATE, ISN'T THE ANSWER AS OBVIOUS, AS IT IS SIMPLE--
--YOU ARE BOTH WHO YOU CLAIM TO BE!
YOU ARE BOTH KWANNON AND BOTH ELISABETH BRADDOCK.
THE ESSENTIAL QUESTION IS--CAN EITHER OF YOU EVER TRULY BECOME THE WHOLE AGAIN?
AND MORE... DO YOU DESIRE TO?


THE JEEP'S TIRES DIG DEEP INTO THE LATE WINTER SNOW.
THOUGH IT SEEMS, IRONY DELIGHTS IN FOLLOWING HIM THROUGH LIFE LIKE A LEADEN WEIGHT.
MR. MILBURY--?
I CAME TO SEE IF YOU NEEDED A HAND WITH THAT TREE...
SCOTT SUMMERS WONDERS AT THE IMAGERY OF WHEELS SPINNING TO BE IRONICALLY APROPOS TO HIS CURRENT STATE.
MR. MIL-- BUR-- EE--?
WHY, SCOTT, YOU HAVE GROWN TO SUCH A KIND MAN... BUT THEN, YOU WERE A KIND BOY.
AH, I'M AFRAID WE SPEAK IN METAPHOR. FOR THE ONLY TREE MR. MILBURY HAS EVER HAD ANY REAL INTEREST IN--
BUT THEN, HE WAS NEVER MUCH ONE FOR IRONY.
--IS YOUR FAMILY TREE. BLOODLINES AND BREEDING. EVOLUTION AND HEIRS. THE VERY STUFF OF LIFE, SCOTT!
NOW THEN, HAVING SAID THAT--
--WOULD YOU PREFER TO JOIN ME--
--OR DOES THE SUMMERS FAMILY LINE END HERE AND NOW?!
NEXT:
MR. SINISTER VS. CYCLOPS!
SECRETS REVEALED!
REVANCHE VS. PSYLOCKE!
MYSTERIES RESOLVED!
The DARK RIDERS VS.?
THE WINNER WILL SURPRISE YOU!


QUESADA
CLIMBING TO THE TOP
CLAREMONT
AFTER THE X-MEN
THE JUSTICE LEAGUERS
BEHIND THE SCENES
AN X-TREME STRUGGLE
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23
AUG
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APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
ANDY KUBERT
MARK PENNINGTON
COMES THE TIME OF TESTING...

SCOTT SUMMERS CAME TO HIS GRANDPARENTS' HOME OUTSIDE OF ANCHORAGE, ALASKA TO GET AWAY FROM THINGS LIKE THIS.
HE SHOULD KNOW BY NOW, WHAT A FOOLISH HOPE THAT IS.
SCOTT CANNOT DENY WHAT HE IS-- A MUTANT-- BORN WITH OPTIC BLASTS HE MUST FOREVER STRUGGLE TO CONTROL.
AND FOREVER USE TO STRUGGLE AGAINST THOSE WHO SEEK TO CONTROL HIM...
LEANING TOWARDS ONESELF

A TALE OF THE X MEN

BY
FABIAN
NICIEZA
AND
ANDY
KUBERT

•

MARK PENNINGTON
INKER

BILL OAKLEY
LETTERER

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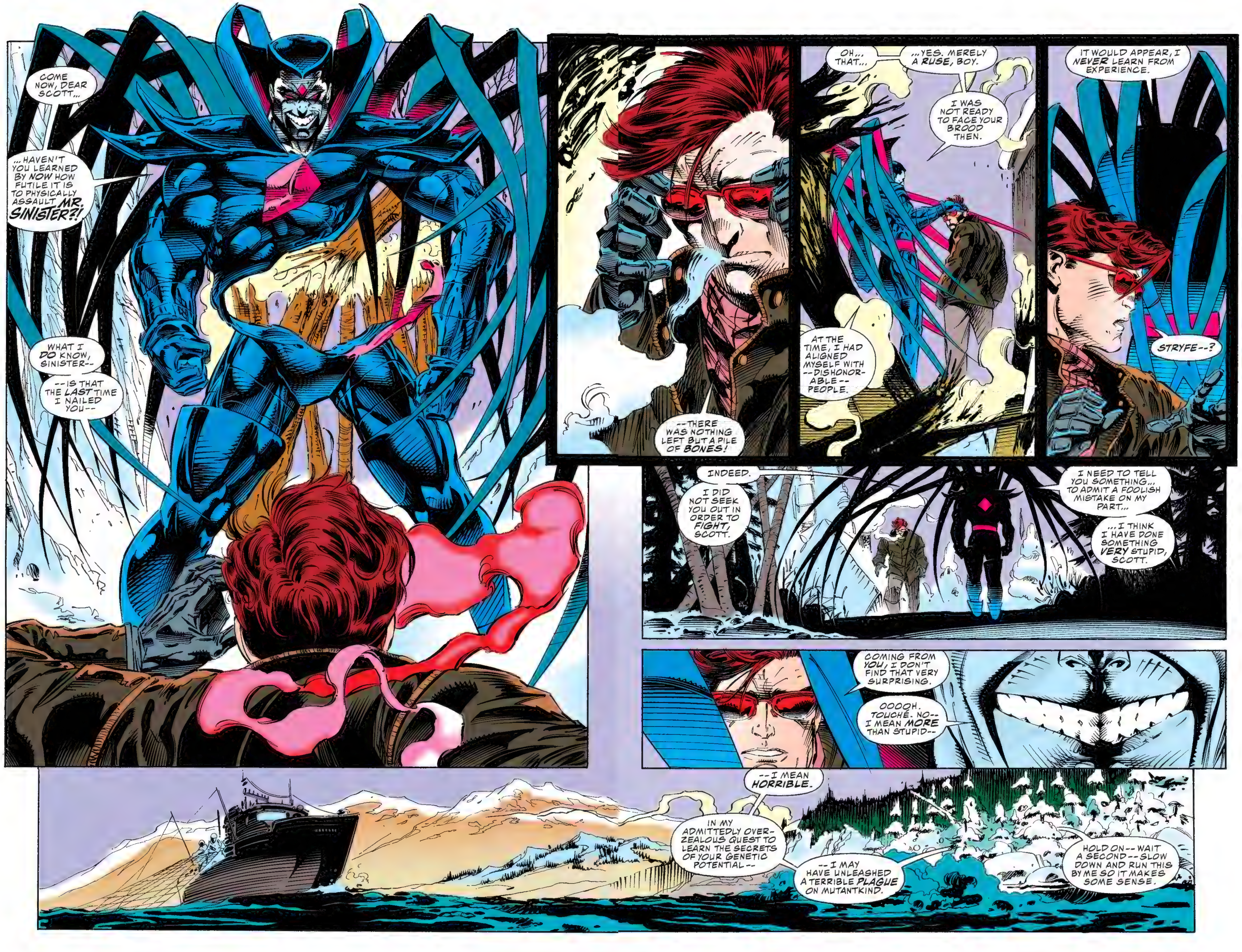
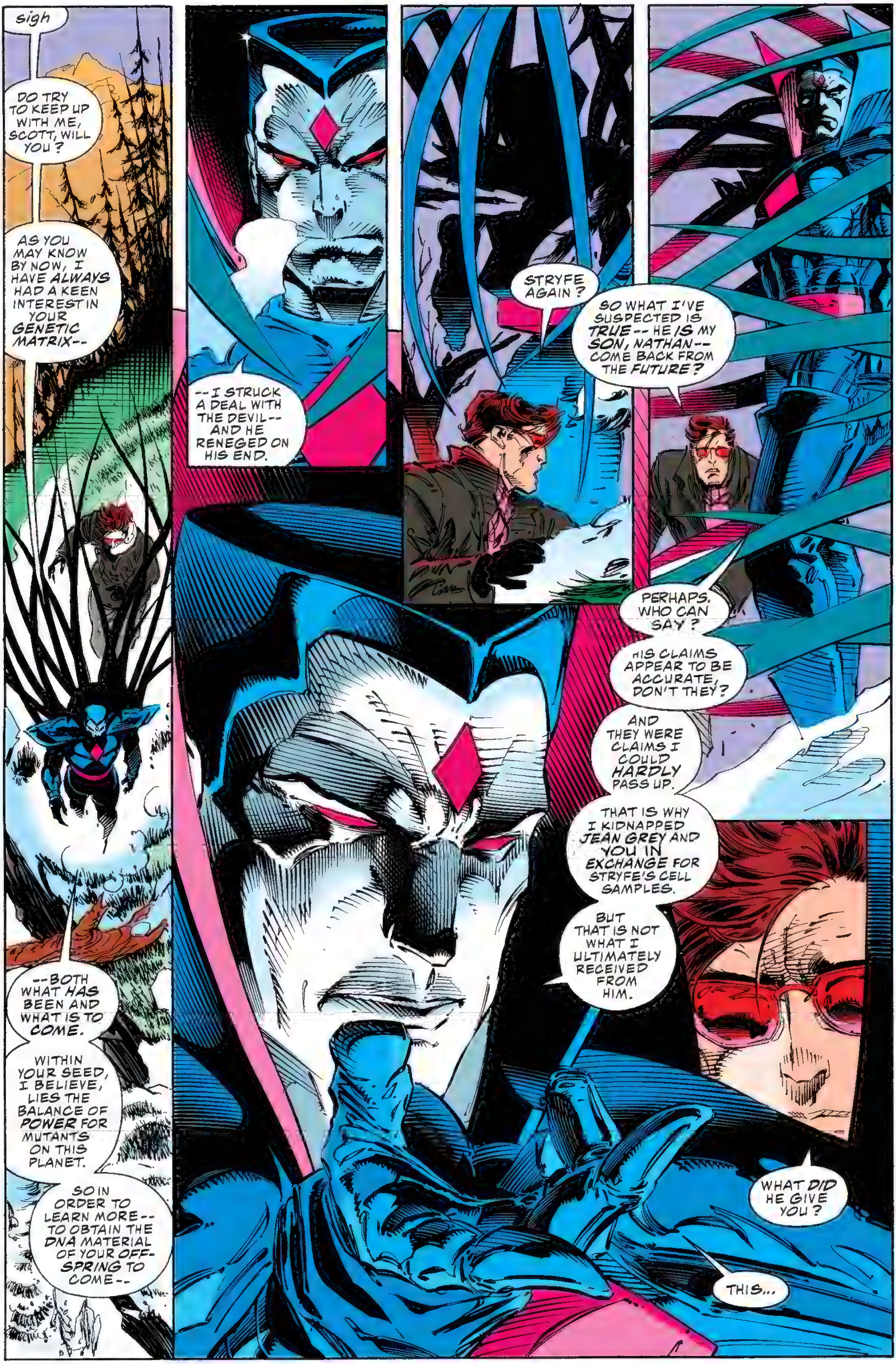
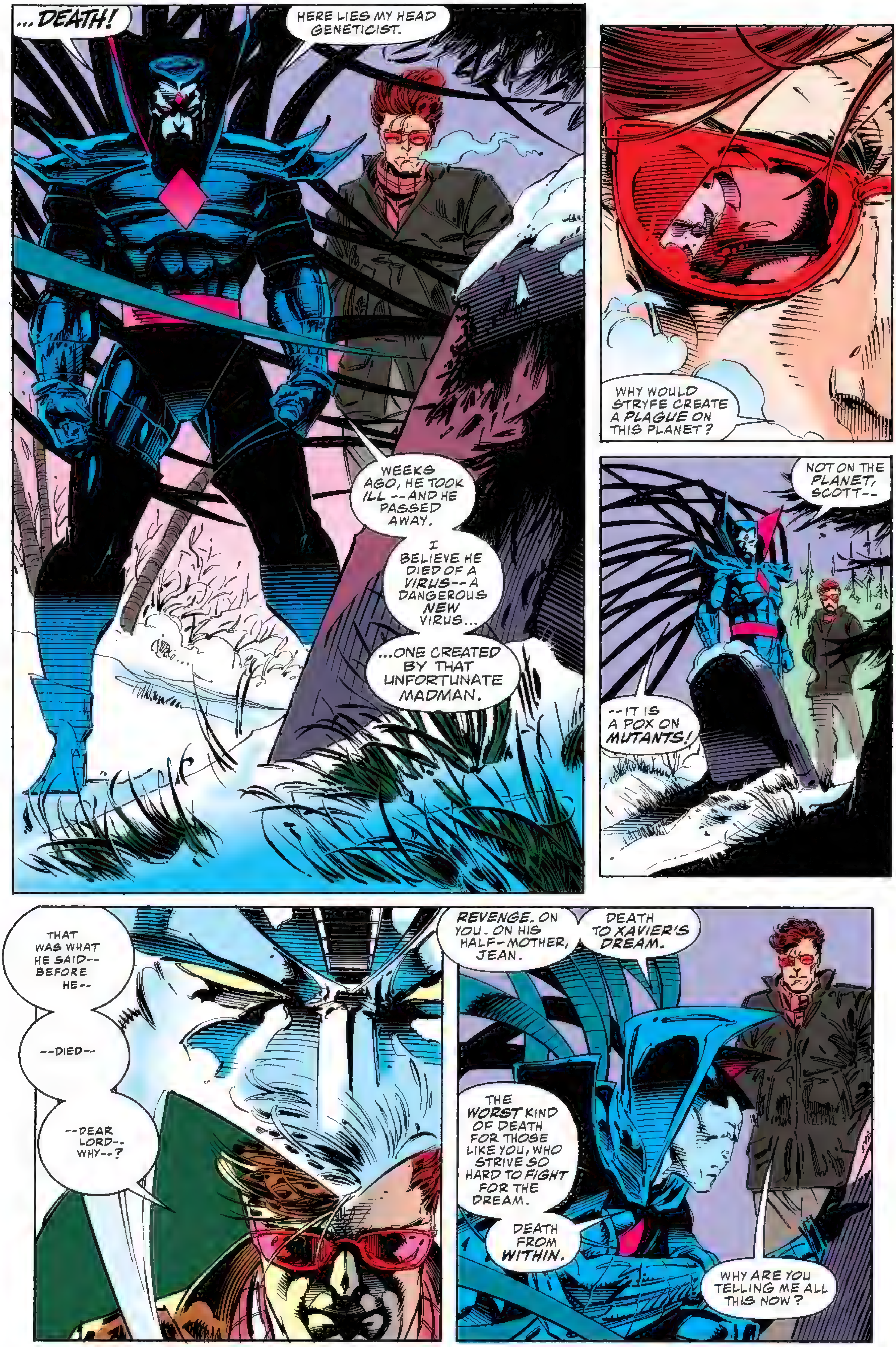
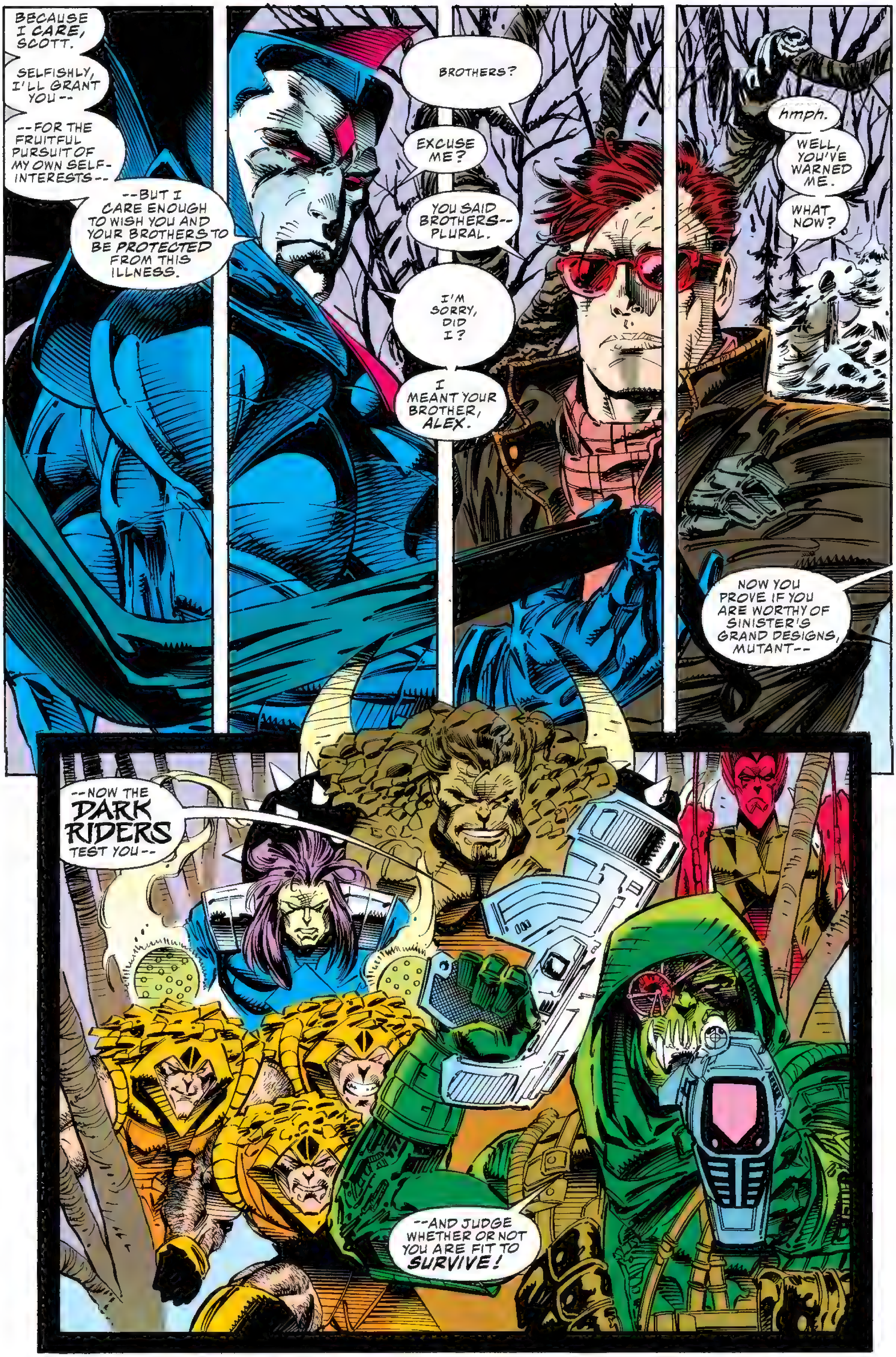
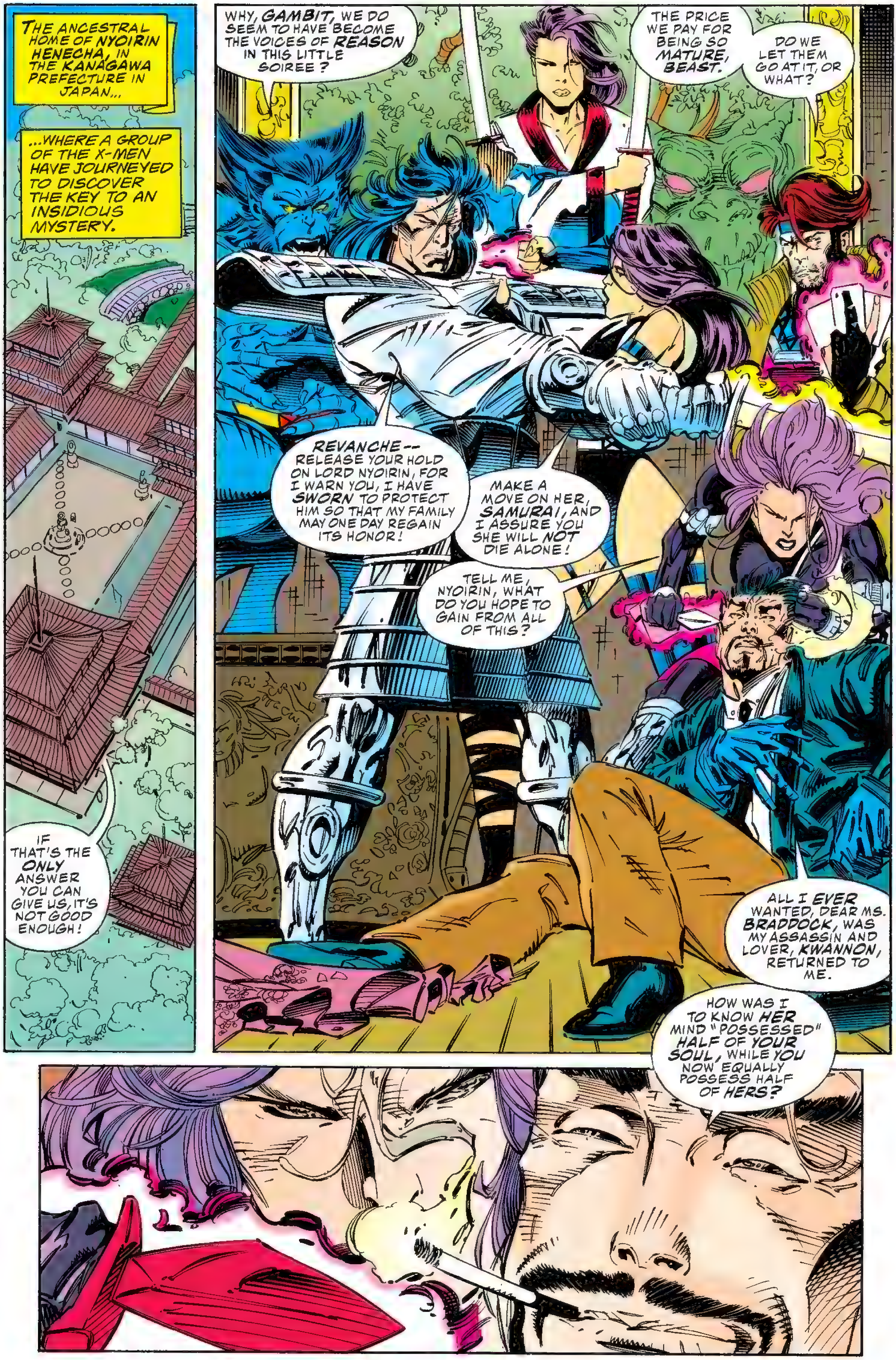
TOWER OF PIZZA

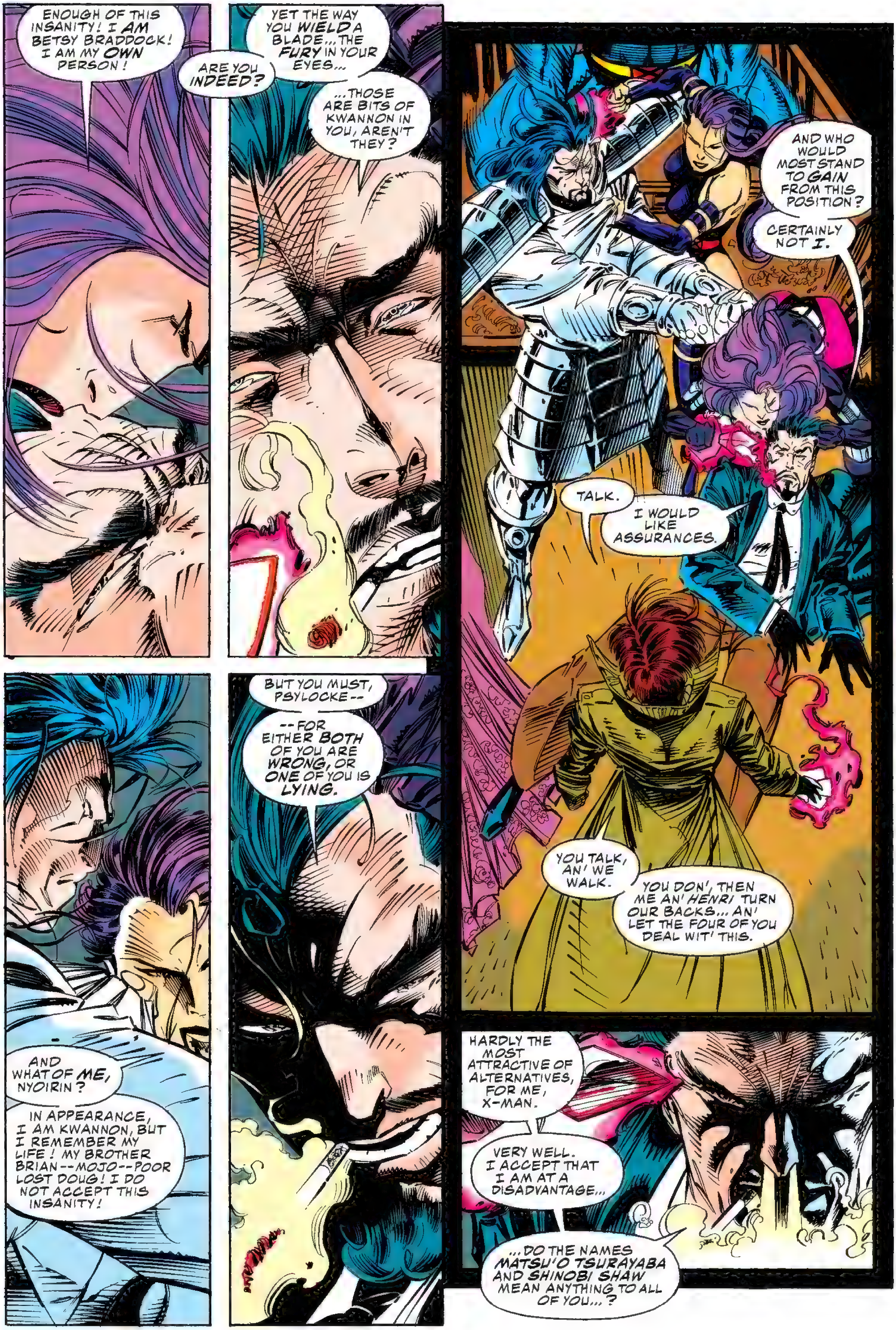

COME NOW, DEAR SCOTT...
...HAVEN'T YOU LEARNED BY NOW HOW FUTILE IT IS TO PHYSICALLY ASSAULT MR. SINISTER?!
WHAT I DO KNOW, SINISTER--
--IS THAT THE LAST TIME I NAILED YOU--
--THERE WAS NOTHING LEFT BUT A PILE OF BONES!
OH... THAT...
...YES. MERELY A RUSE, BOY.
I WAS NOT READY TO FACE YOUR BROOD THEN.
AT THE TIME, I HAD ALIGNED MYSELF WITH --DISHONORABLE-- PEOPLE.
IT WOULD APPEAR, I NEVER LEARN FROM EXPERIENCE.
STRYFE--?
INDEED.
I DID NOT SEEK YOU OUT IN ORDER TO FIGHT, SCOTT.
I NEED TO TELL YOU SOMETHING... TO ADMIT A FOOLISH MISTAKE ON MY PART.
...I THINK I HAVE DONE SOMETHING VERY STUPID, SCOTT.
COMING FROM YOU, I DON'T FIND THAT VERY SURPRISING.
OOOOH. TOUCHÉ. NO-- I MEAN MORE THAN STUPID--
--I MEAN HORRIBLE.
IN MY ADMITTEDLY OVER-ZEALOUS QUEST TO LEARN THE SECRETS OF YOUR GENETIC POTENTIAL--
--I MAY HAVE UNLEASHED A TERRIBLE PLAGUE ON MUTANTKIND.
HOLD ON-- WAIT A SECOND-- SLOW DOWN AND RUN THIS BY ME SO IT MAKES SOME SENSE.

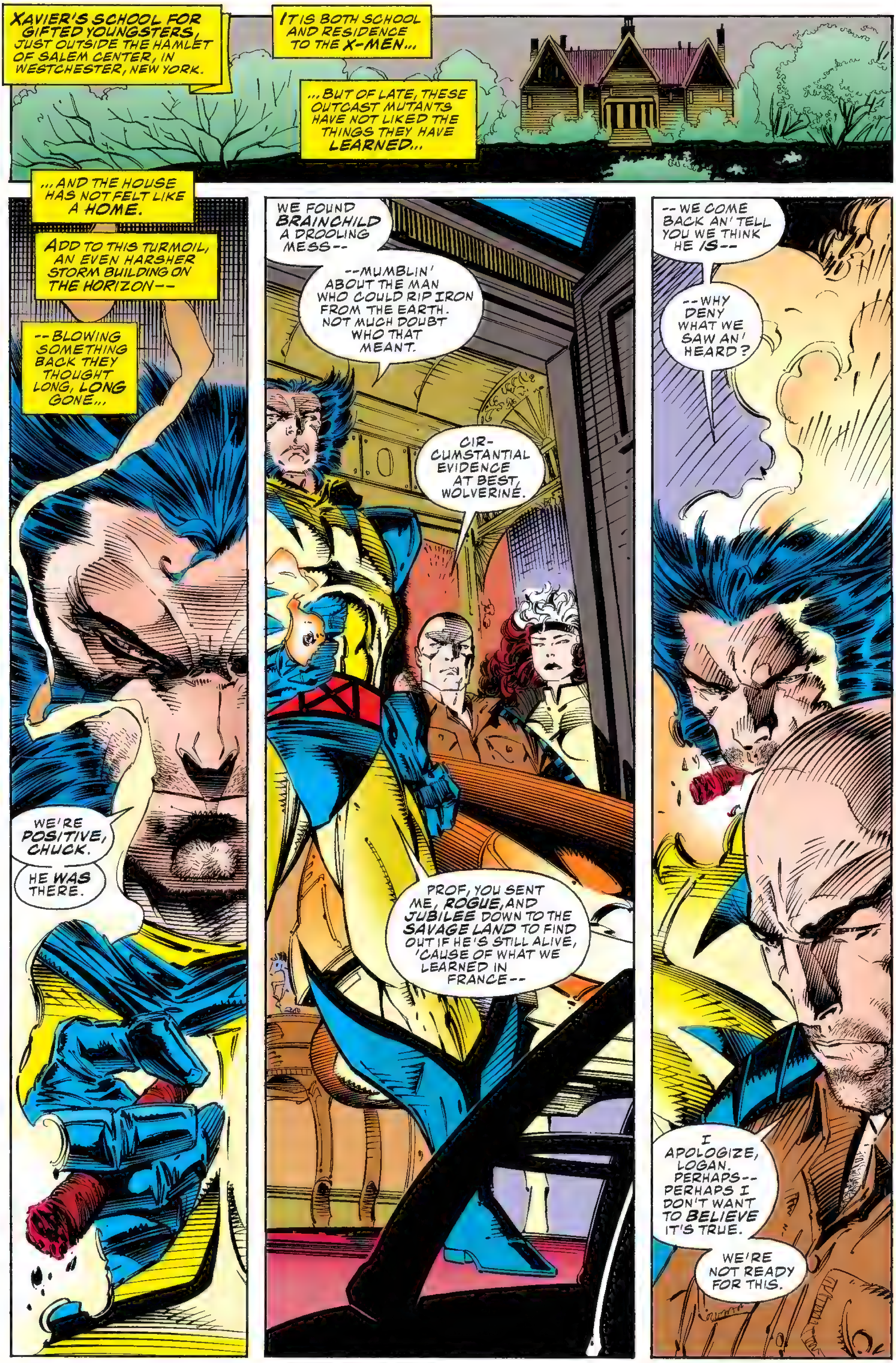

sigh
DO TRY TO KEEP UP WITH ME, SCOTT, WILL YOU?
AS YOU MAY KNOW BY NOW, I HAVE *ALWAYS* HAD A KEEN INTEREST IN YOUR *GENETIC MATRIX*--
--BOTH WHAT *HAS* BEEN AND WHAT IS TO *COME*.
WITHIN YOUR SEED, I BELIEVE, LIES THE BALANCE OF *POWER* FOR MUTANTS ON THIS PLANET.
SO IN ORDER TO LEARN MORE--TO OBTAIN THE *DNA* MATERIAL OF YOUR *OFFSPRING* TO COME--
--I STRUCK A DEAL WITH THE DEVIL--AND HE RENEGED ON HIS END.
STRYFE AGAIN?
SO WHAT I'VE SUSPECTED IS *TRUE*--HE *IS* MY *SON, NATHAN*--COME BACK FROM THE *FUTURE*?
PERHAPS. WHO CAN SAY?
HIS CLAIMS APPEAR TO BE ACCURATE, DON'T THEY?
AND THEY WERE CLAIMS I COULD *HARDLY* PASS UP.
THAT IS WHY I KIDNAPPED *JEAN GREY* AND *YOU* IN *EXCHANGE* FOR STRYFE'S CELL SAMPLES.
BUT THAT IS NOT WHAT I ULTIMATELY RECEIVED FROM HIM.
WHAT *DID* HE GIVE YOU?
THIS...

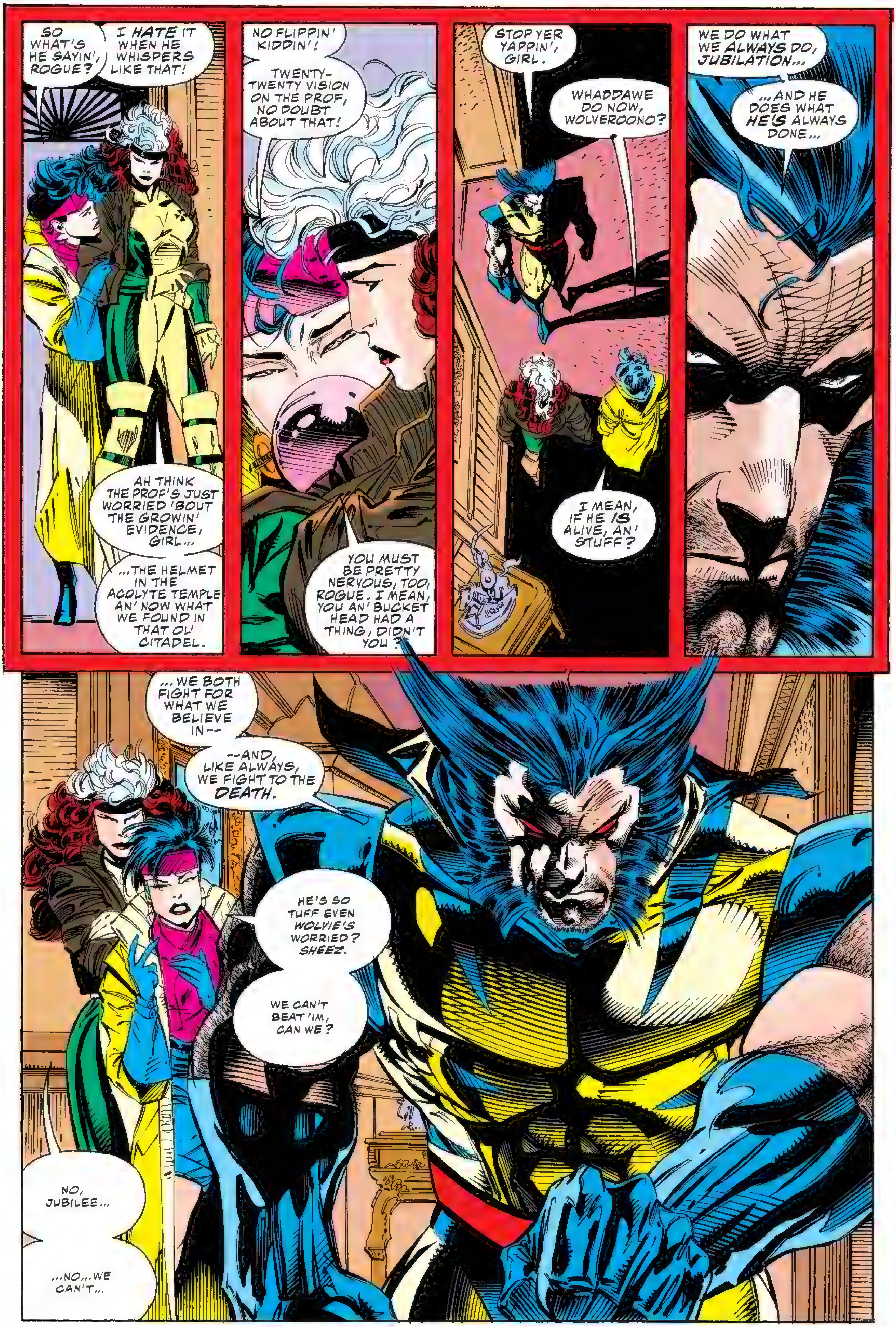

...DEATH!
HERE LIES MY HEAD GENETICIST.
WEEKS AGO, HE TOOK ILL --AND HE PASSED AWAY.
I BELIEVE HE DIED OF A VIRUS-- A DANGEROUS NEW VIRUS...
...ONE CREATED BY THAT UNFORTUNATE MADMAN.
WHY WOULD STRYFE CREATE A PLAGUE ON THIS PLANET?
NOT ON THE PLANET, SCOTT--
--IT IS A POX ON MUTANTS!
THAT WAS WHAT HE SAID-- BEFORE HE--
--DIED--
--DEAR LORD-- WHY--?
REVENGE. ON YOU. ON HIS HALF-MOTHER, JEAN.
DEATH TO XAVIER'S DREAM.
THE WORST KIND OF DEATH FOR THOSE LIKE YOU, WHO STRIVE SO HARD TO FIGHT FOR THE DREAM.
DEATH FROM WITHIN.
WHY ARE YOU TELLING ME ALL THIS NOW?


BECAUSE I *CARE*, SCOTT.
SELFISHLY, I'LL GRANT YOU--
--FOR THE FRUITFUL PURSUIT OF MY OWN SELF-INTERESTS--
--BUT I CARE ENOUGH TO WISH YOU AND YOUR BROTHERS TO BE *PROTECTED* FROM THIS ILLNESS.
BROTHERS?
EXCUSE ME?
YOU SAID BROTHERS--PLURAL.
I'M SORRY, DID I?
I MEANT YOUR BROTHER, *ALEX*.
hmph.
WELL, YOU'VE WARNED ME.
WHAT NOW?
NOW YOU PROVE IF YOU ARE WORTHY OF SINISTER'S GRAND DESIGNS, MUTANT--
--NOW THE DARK RIDERS TEST YOU--
--AND JUDGE WHETHER OR NOT YOU ARE FIT TO *SURVIVE!*

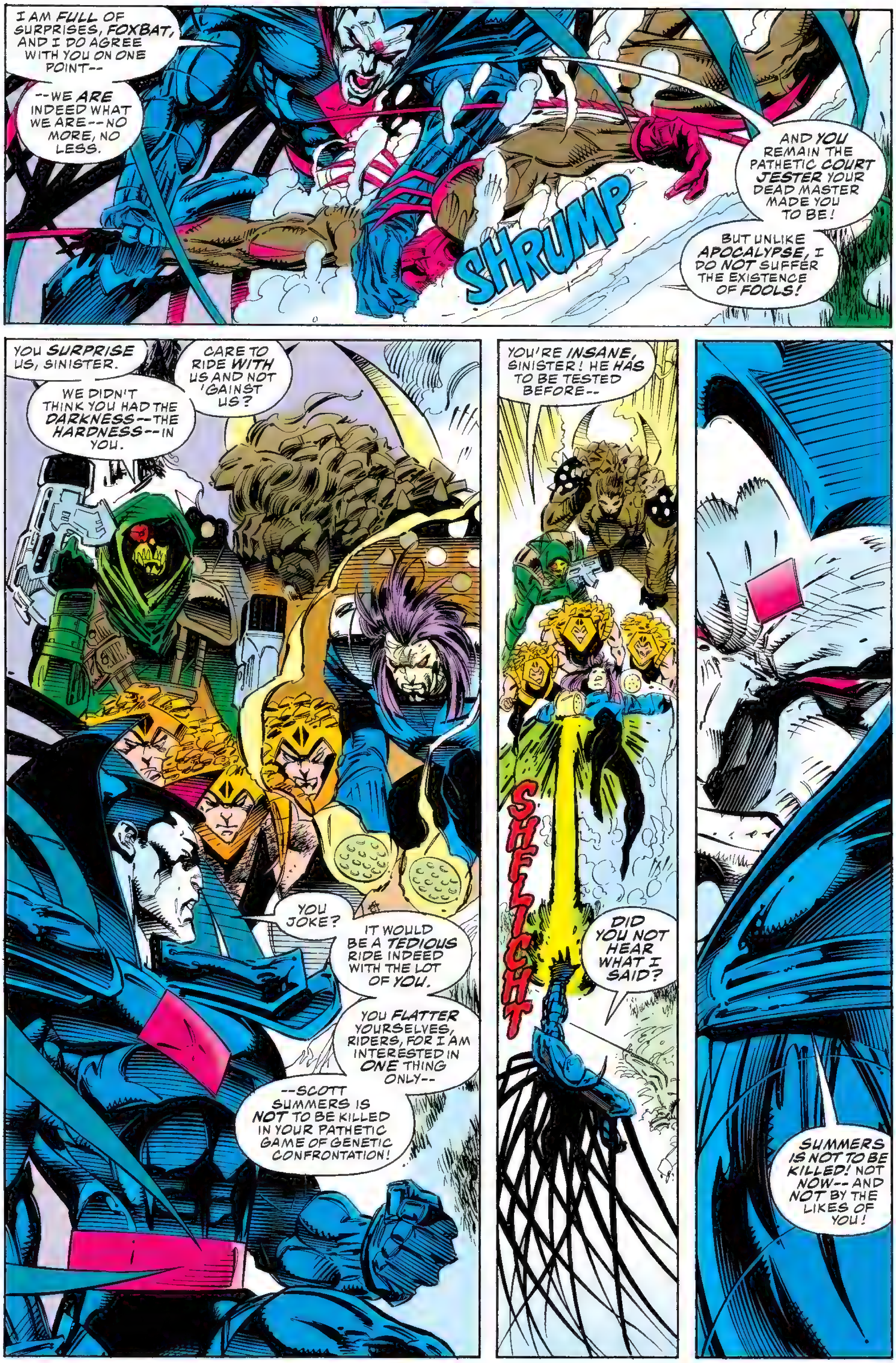

THE ANCESTRAL HOME OF NYOIRIN HENECHA, IN THE KANAGAWA PREFECTURE IN JAPAN...
...WHERE A GROUP OF THE X-MEN HAVE JOURNEYED TO DISCOVER THE KEY TO AN INSIDIOUS MYSTERY.
WHY, GAMBIT, WE DO SEEM TO HAVE BECOME THE VOICES OF REASON IN THIS LITTLE SOIREE ?
THE PRICE WE PAY FOR BEING SO MATURE, BEAST.
DO WE LET THEM GO AT IT, OR WHAT?
REVANCHE-- RELEASE YOUR HOLD ON LORD NYOIRIN, FOR I WARN YOU, I HAVE SWORN TO PROTECT HIM SO THAT MY FAMILY MAY ONE DAY REGAIN ITS HONOR!
MAKE A MOVE ON HER, SAMURAI, AND I ASSURE YOU SHE WILL NOT DIE ALONE!
TELL ME, NYOIRIN, WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO GAIN FROM ALL OF THIS?
ALL I EVER WANTED, DEAR MS. BRADDOCK, WAS MY ASSASSIN AND LOVER, KWANNON, RETURNED TO ME.
HOW WAS I TO KNOW HER MIND "POSSESSED" HALF OF YOUR SOUL, WHILE YOU NOW EQUALLY POSSESS HALF OF HERS?
IF THAT'S THE ONLY ANSWER YOU CAN GIVE US, IT'S NOT GOOD ENOUGH!

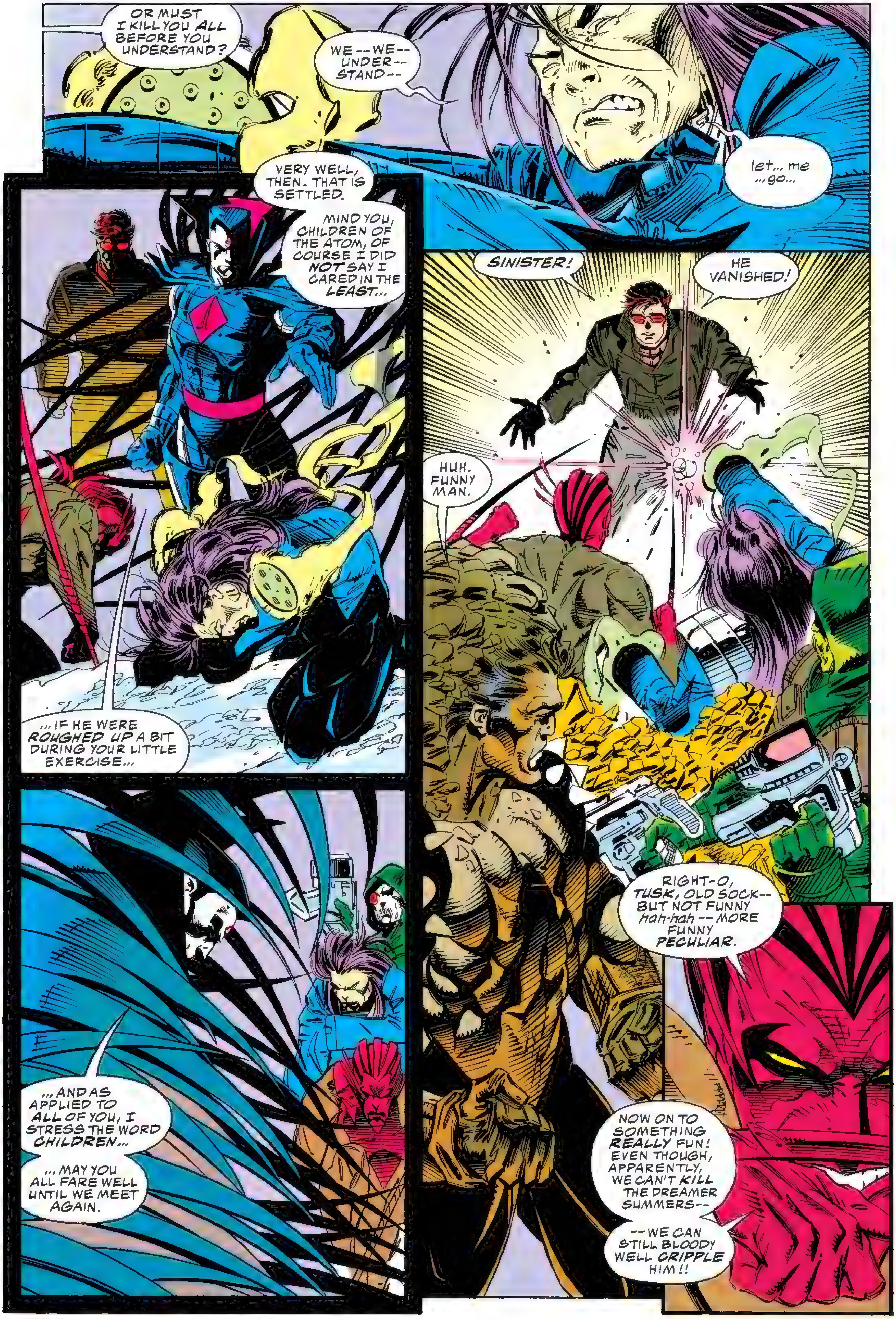

ENOUGH OF THIS INSANITY! I *AM* BETSY BRADDOCK! I AM MY *OWN* PERSON!
ARE YOU *INDEED?*
YET THE WAY YOU *WIELD* A BLADE... THE *FURY* IN YOUR EYES...
...THOSE ARE BITS OF KWANNON IN YOU, AREN'T THEY?
AND WHAT OF *ME*, NYOIRIN?
IN APPEARANCE, I AM KWANNON, BUT I REMEMBER MY LIFE! MY BROTHER BRIAN--MOJO--POOR LOST DOUG! I DO NOT ACCEPT THIS INSANITY!
BUT YOU MUST, PSYLOCKE--
--FOR EITHER *BOTH* OF YOU ARE *WRONG*, OR *ONE* OF YOU IS *LYING*.
AND WHO WOULD MOST STAND TO *GAIN* FROM THIS POSITION?
CERTAINLY NOT *I*.
TALK.
I WOULD LIKE ASSURANCES.
YOU TALK, AN' WE WALK.
YOU DON', THEN ME AN' *HENRI* TURN OUR BACKS... AN' LET THE FOUR OF YOU DEAL WIT' THIS.
HARDLY THE MOST ATTRACTIVE OF ALTERNATIVES, FOR ME, X-MAN.
VERY WELL. I ACCEPT THAT I AM AT A DISADVANTAGE...
...DO THE NAMES *MATSU'O TSURAYABA* AND *SHINOBI SHAW* MEAN ANYTHING TO ALL OF YOU...?

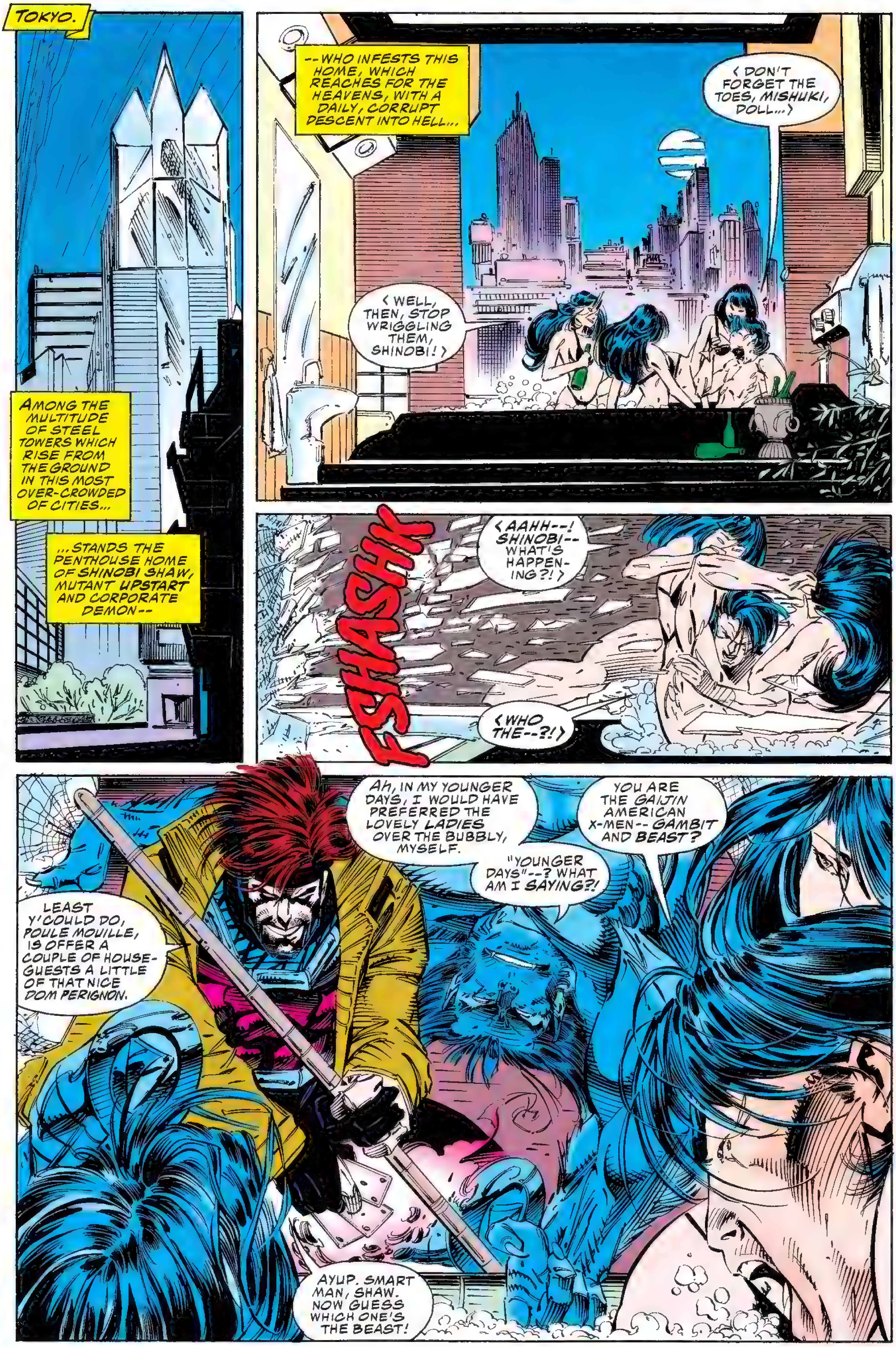

XAVIER'S SCHOOL FOR GIFTED YOUNGSTERS, JUST OUTSIDE THE HAMLET OF SALEM CENTER, IN WESTCHESTER, NEW YORK.
IT IS BOTH SCHOOL AND RESIDENCE TO THE X-MEN...
...BUT OF LATE, THESE OUTCAST MUTANTS HAVE NOT LIKED THE THINGS THEY HAVE LEARNED...
...AND THE HOUSE HAS NOT FELT LIKE A HOME.
ADD TO THIS TURMOIL, AN EVEN HARSHER STORM BUILDING ON THE HORIZON--
--BLOWING SOMETHING BACK THEY THOUGHT LONG, LONG GONE...
WE'RE POSITIVE, CHUCK.
HE WAS THERE.
WE FOUND BRAINCHILD A DROOLING MESS--
--MUMBLIN' ABOUT THE MAN WHO COULD RIP IRON FROM THE EARTH. NOT MUCH DOUBT WHO THAT MEANT.
CIR-CUMSTANTIAL EVIDENCE AT BEST, WOLVERINE.
PROF, YOU SENT ME, ROGUE, AND JUBILEE DOWN TO THE SAVAGE LAND TO FIND OUT IF HE'S STILL ALIVE, 'CAUSE OF WHAT WE LEARNED IN FRANCE--
--WE COME BACK AN' TELL YOU WE THINK HE IS--
--WHY DENY WHAT WE SAW AN' HEARD?
I APOLOGIZE, LOGAN. PERHAPS--PERHAPS I DON'T WANT TO BELIEVE IT'S TRUE.
WE'RE NOT READY FOR THIS.

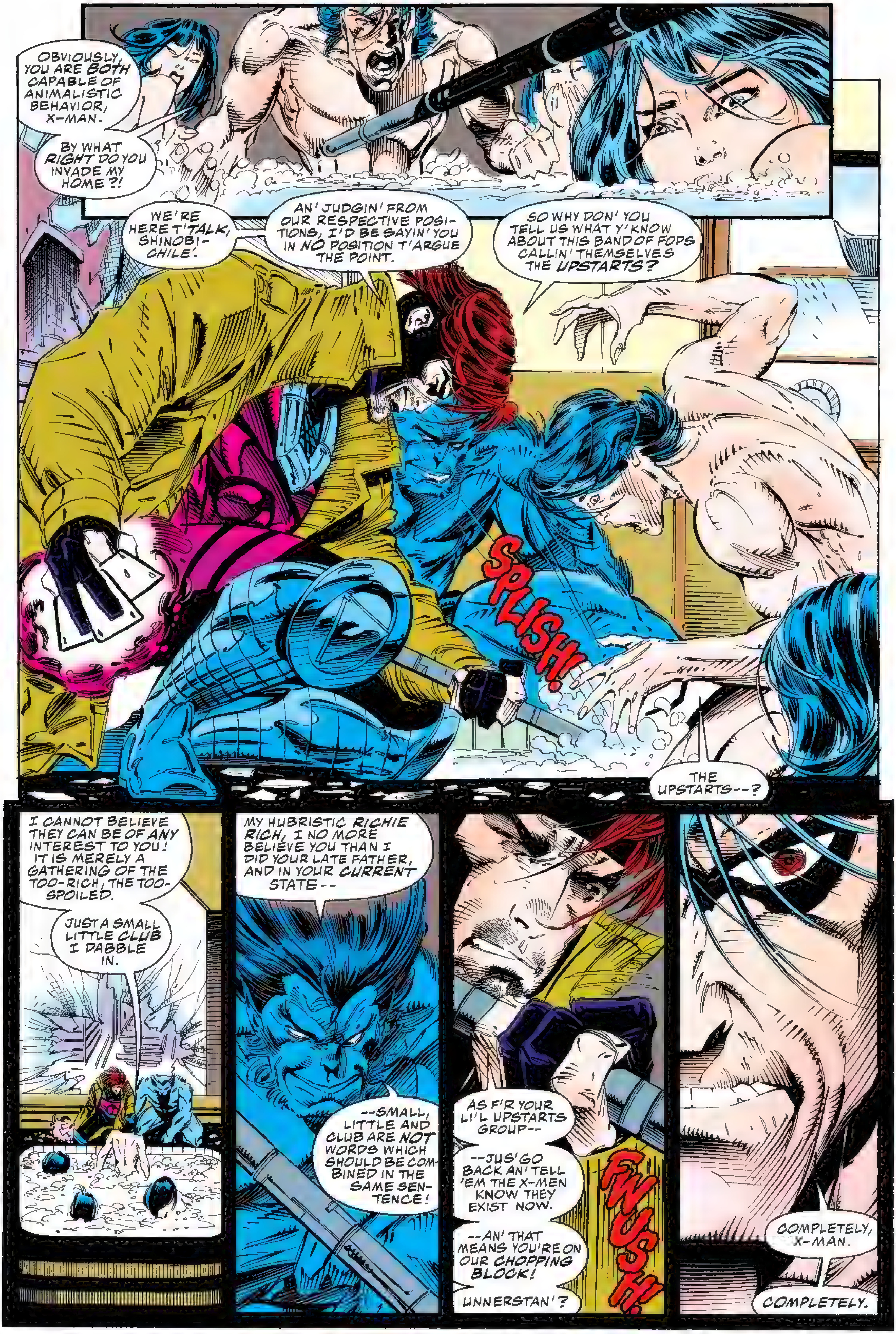

SO WHAT'S HE SAYIN', ROGUE?
I *HATE* IT WHEN HE WHISPERS LIKE THAT!
AH THINK THE PROF'S JUST WORRIED 'BOUT THE GROWIN' EVIDENCE, GIRL...
...THE HELMET IN THE ACOLYTE TEMPLE AN' NOW WHAT WE FOUND IN THAT OL' CITADEL.
NO FLIPPIN' KIDDIN'!
TWENTY-TWENTY VISION ON THE PROF, NO DOUBT ABOUT THAT!
YOU MUST BE PRETTY NERVOUS, TOO, ROGUE. I MEAN, YOU AN' BUCKET HEAD HAD A THING, DIDN'T YOU?
STOP YER YAPPIN', GIRL.
WHADDAWE DO NOW, WOLVEROONO?
I MEAN, IF HE *IS* ALIVE, AN' STUFF?
WE DO WHAT WE *ALWAYS* DO, *JUBILATION*...
...AND HE DOES WHAT *HE'S* ALWAYS DONE...
...WE BOTH FIGHT FOR WHAT WE BELIEVE IN--
--AND, LIKE ALWAYS, WE FIGHT TO THE *DEATH*.
HE'S SO TUFF EVEN *WOLVIE'S* WORRIED? SHEEZ.
WE CAN'T BEAT 'IM, CAN WE?
NO, JUBILEE...
...NO... WE CAN'T...

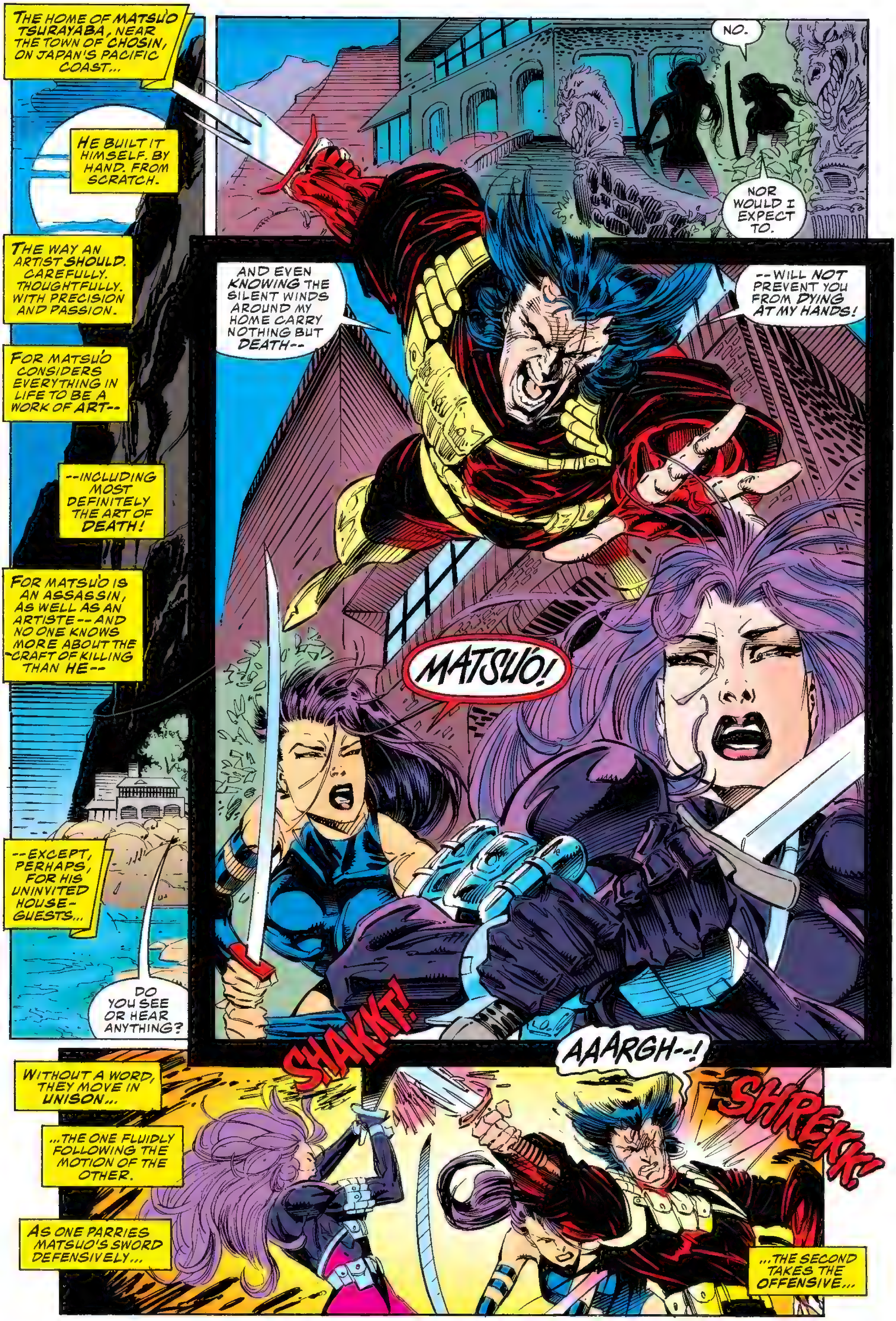
ANCHORAGE...
ZZARK!
YOU SEEK TO THREATEN ME?!
WHAT AN ARROGANT, PRESUMPTUOUS LOT YOU ARE!
SINCE YOU PRATTLE AND WAIL ON SO WITH YOUR DARWINIAN DELUSIONS OF SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST--
--WOULD YOU LIKE US TO SHOW YOU THE DEFINITION OF AN EVOLUTIONARY DEAD END?
YOU'RE OBVIOUSLY NOT MUCH OF A BATTLEFIELD OPERATIVE, ARE YOU, SINISTER?
WE NEED A LITTLE LESS SPOUTING OFF, AND A LITTLE MORE COHESIVE ACTION!
WE ALL MUST BE TRUE TO WHAT WE ARE, SUMMERS!
DO YOU TRULY BELIEVE THAT, RIDER?
YOU ARE SADLY MISTAKEN.
WHAT GAUNTLET MEANS, ONE-EYE--
--IS THAT SINISTER IS A SCHEMER, NOT A SOLDIER.
AN' SCHEMERS TALK BY NATURE--
--TOO AFRAID TO GET THEIR HANDS DIRTY!
H-HOW DID YOU MOVE SO FAST?!


I AM FULL OF SURPRISES, FOXBAT, AND I DO AGREE WITH YOU ON ONE POINT--
--WE ARE INDEED WHAT WE ARE--NO MORE, NO LESS.
AND YOU REMAIN THE PATHETIC COURT JESTER YOUR DEAD MASTER MADE YOU TO BE!
BUT UNLIKE APOCALYPSE, I DO NOT SUFFER THE EXISTENCE OF FOOLS!
SHRUMP
YOU SURPRISE US, SINISTER.
WE DIDN'T THINK YOU HAD THE DARKNESS--THE HARDNESS--IN YOU.
CARE TO RIDE WITH US AND NOT 'GAINST US?
YOU JOKE?
IT WOULD BE A TEDIOUS RIDE INDEED WITH THE LOT OF YOU.
YOU FLATTER YOURSELVES, RIDERS, FOR I AM INTERESTED IN ONE THING ONLY--
--SCOTT SUMMERS IS NOT TO BE KILLED IN YOUR PATHETIC GAME OF GENETIC CONFRONTATION!
YOU'RE INSANE, SINISTER! HE HAS TO BE TESTED BEFORE--
SHFLICHT
DID YOU NOT HEAR WHAT I SAID?
SUMMERS IS NOT TO BE KILLED! NOT NOW--AND NOT BY THE LIKES OF YOU!

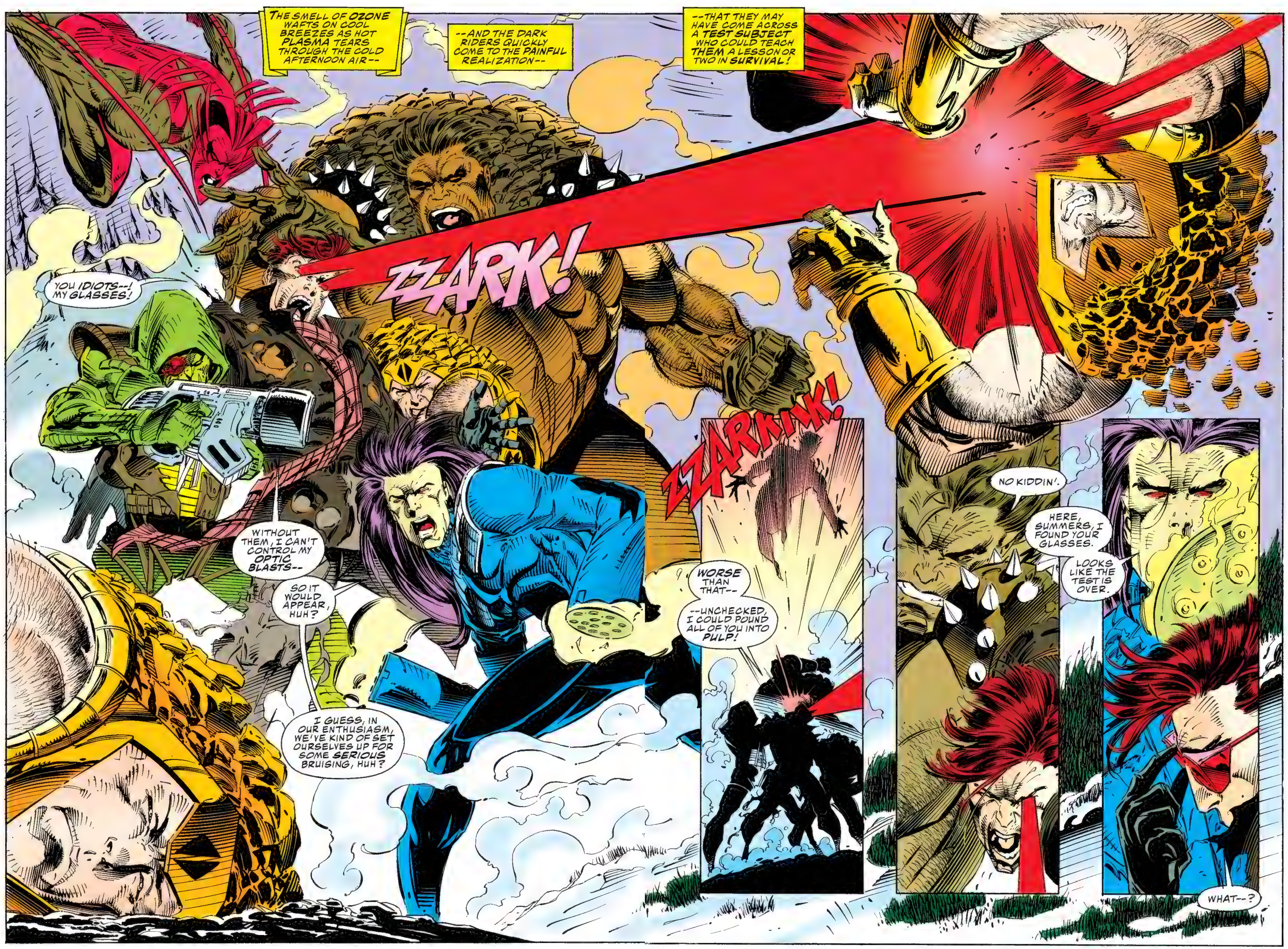

OR MUST I KILL YOU ALL BEFORE YOU UNDERSTAND?
WE--WE--UNDER--STAND--
let... me ...go...
VERY WELL, THEN. THAT IS SETTLED.
MIND YOU, CHILDREN OF THE ATOM, OF COURSE I DID NOT SAY I CARED IN THE LEAST...
...IF HE WERE ROUGHED UP A BIT DURING YOUR LITTLE EXERCISE...
...AND AS APPLIED TO ALL OF YOU, I STRESS THE WORD CHILDREN...
...MAY YOU ALL FARE WELL UNTIL WE MEET AGAIN.
SINISTER!
HE VANISHED!
HUH. FUNNY MAN.
RIGHT-O, TUSK, OLD SOCK--BUT NOT FUNNY hah-hah -- MORE FUNNY PECULIAR.
NOW ON TO SOMETHING REALLY FUN! EVEN THOUGH, APPARENTLY, WE CAN'T KILL THE DREAMER SUMMERS--
--WE CAN STILL BLOODY WELL CRIPPLE HIM!!


TOKYO.
AMONG THE MULTITUDE OF STEEL TOWERS WHICH RISE FROM THE GROUND IN THIS MOST OVER-CROWDED OF CITIES...
...STANDS THE PENTHOUSE HOME OF SHINOBI SHAW, MUTANT UPSTART AND CORPORATE DEMON--
--WHO INFESTS THIS HOME, WHICH REACHES FOR THE HEAVENS, WITH A DAILY, CORRUPT DESCENT INTO HELL...
‹DON'T FORGET THE TOES, MISHUKI, DOLL...›
‹WELL, THEN, STOP WRIGGLING THEM, SHINOBI!›
FSHASH
‹AAHH--! SHINOBI-- WHAT'S HAPPEN-ING?!›
‹WHO THE--?!›
AH, IN MY YOUNGER DAYS, I WOULD HAVE PREFERRED THE LOVELY LADIES OVER THE BUBBLY, MYSELF.
"YOUNGER DAYS"--? WHAT AM I SAYING?!
YOU ARE THE GAIJIN AMERICAN X-MEN-- GAMBIT AND BEAST?
LEAST Y'COULD DO, POULE MOUILLE, IS OFFER A COUPLE OF HOUSE-GUESTS A LITTLE OF THAT NICE DOM PERIGNON.
AYUP. SMART MAN, SHAW. NOW GUESS WHICH ONE'S THE BEAST!

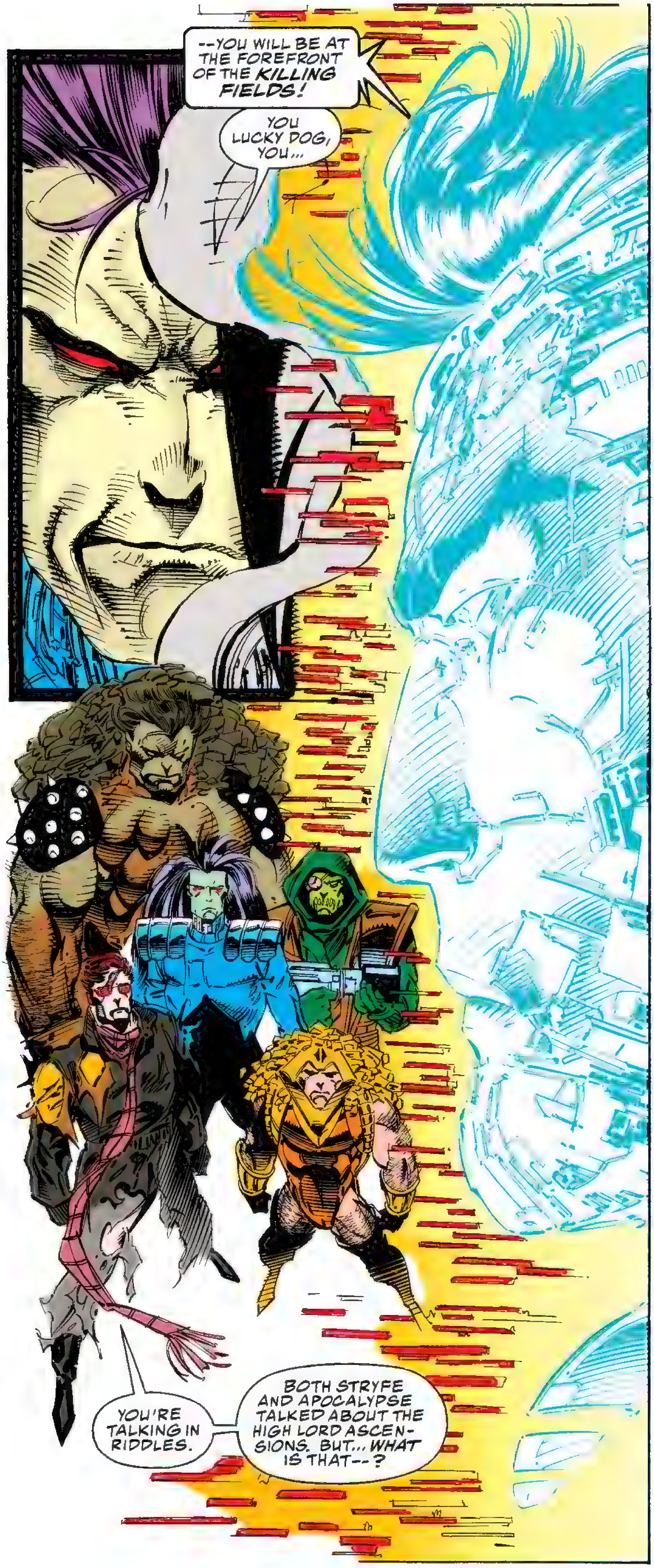

OBVIOUSLY, YOU ARE *BOTH* CAPABLE OF ANIMALISTIC BEHAVIOR, X-MAN.
BY WHAT *RIGHT* DO YOU INVADE MY HOME?!
WE'RE HERE T'*TALK*, SHINOBI-CHILE'.
AN' JUDGIN' FROM OUR RESPECTIVE POSITIONS, I'D BE SAYIN' YOU IN *NO* POSITION T'ARGUE THE POINT.
SO WHY DON' YOU TELL US WHAT Y' KNOW ABOUT THIS BAND OF FOPS CALLIN' THEMSELVES THE *UPSTARTS*?
SPLISH!
THE UPSTARTS--?
I CANNOT BELIEVE THEY CAN BE OF *ANY* INTEREST TO YOU! IT IS MERELY A GATHERING OF THE TOO-RICH, THE TOO-SPOILED.
JUST A SMALL LITTLE *CLUB* I DABBLE IN.
MY HUBRISTIC *RICHIE RICH*, I NO MORE BELIEVE YOU THAN I DID YOUR LATE FATHER, AND IN YOUR *CURRENT* STATE--
--SMALL, LITTLE AND CLUB ARE *NOT* WORDS WHICH SHOULD BE COMBINED IN THE SAME SENTENCE!
AS F'R YOUR LI'L UPSTARTS GROUP--
--JUS' GO BACK AN' TELL 'EM THE X-MEN KNOW THEY EXIST NOW.
--AN' THAT MEANS YOU'RE ON OUR *CHOPPING BLOCK*!
UNNERSTAN'?
FWUSH!
COMPLETELY, X-MAN.
COMPLETELY.

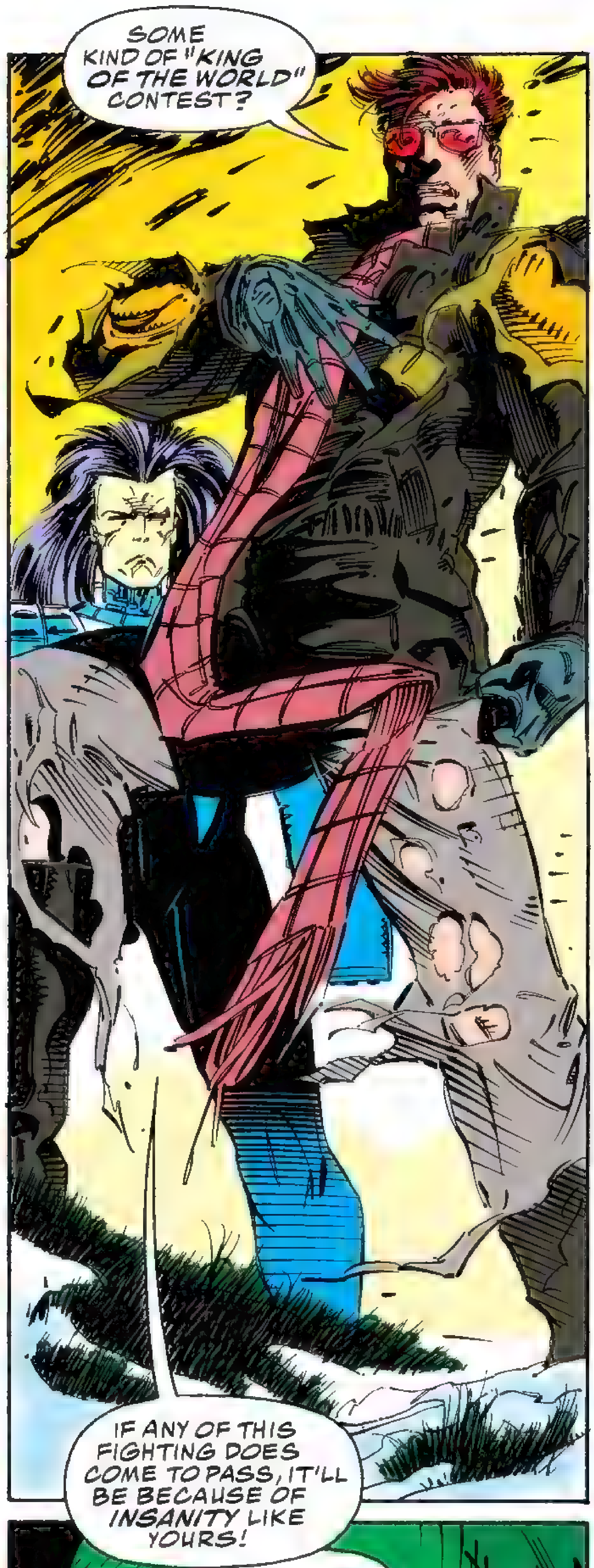

THE HOME OF MATSU'O TSURAYABA, NEAR THE TOWN OF CHOSIN, ON JAPAN'S PACIFIC COAST...
HE BUILT IT HIMSELF. BY HAND. FROM SCRATCH.
THE WAY AN ARTIST SHOULD. CAREFULLY. THOUGHTFULLY. WITH PRECISION AND PASSION.
FOR MATSU'O CONSIDERS EVERYTHING IN LIFE TO BE A WORK OF ART--
--INCLUDING MOST DEFINITELY THE ART OF DEATH!
FOR MATSU'O IS AN ASSASSIN, AS WELL AS AN ARTISTE--AND NO ONE KNOWS MORE ABOUT THE CRAFT OF KILLING THAN HE--
--EXCEPT, PERHAPS, FOR HIS UNINVITED HOUSE-GUESTS...
DO YOU SEE OR HEAR ANYTHING?
NO.
NOR WOULD I EXPECT TO.
AND EVEN KNOWING THE SILENT WINDS AROUND MY HOME CARRY NOTHING BUT DEATH--
--WILL NOT PREVENT YOU FROM DYING AT MY HANDS!
MATSU'O!
SHAKKT!
AAARGH--!
SHREKK!
WITHOUT A WORD, THEY MOVE IN UNISON...
...THE ONE FLUIDLY FOLLOWING THE MOTION OF THE OTHER.
AS ONE PARRIES MATSU'O'S SWORD DEFENSIVELY...
...THE SECOND TAKES THE OFFENSIVE...

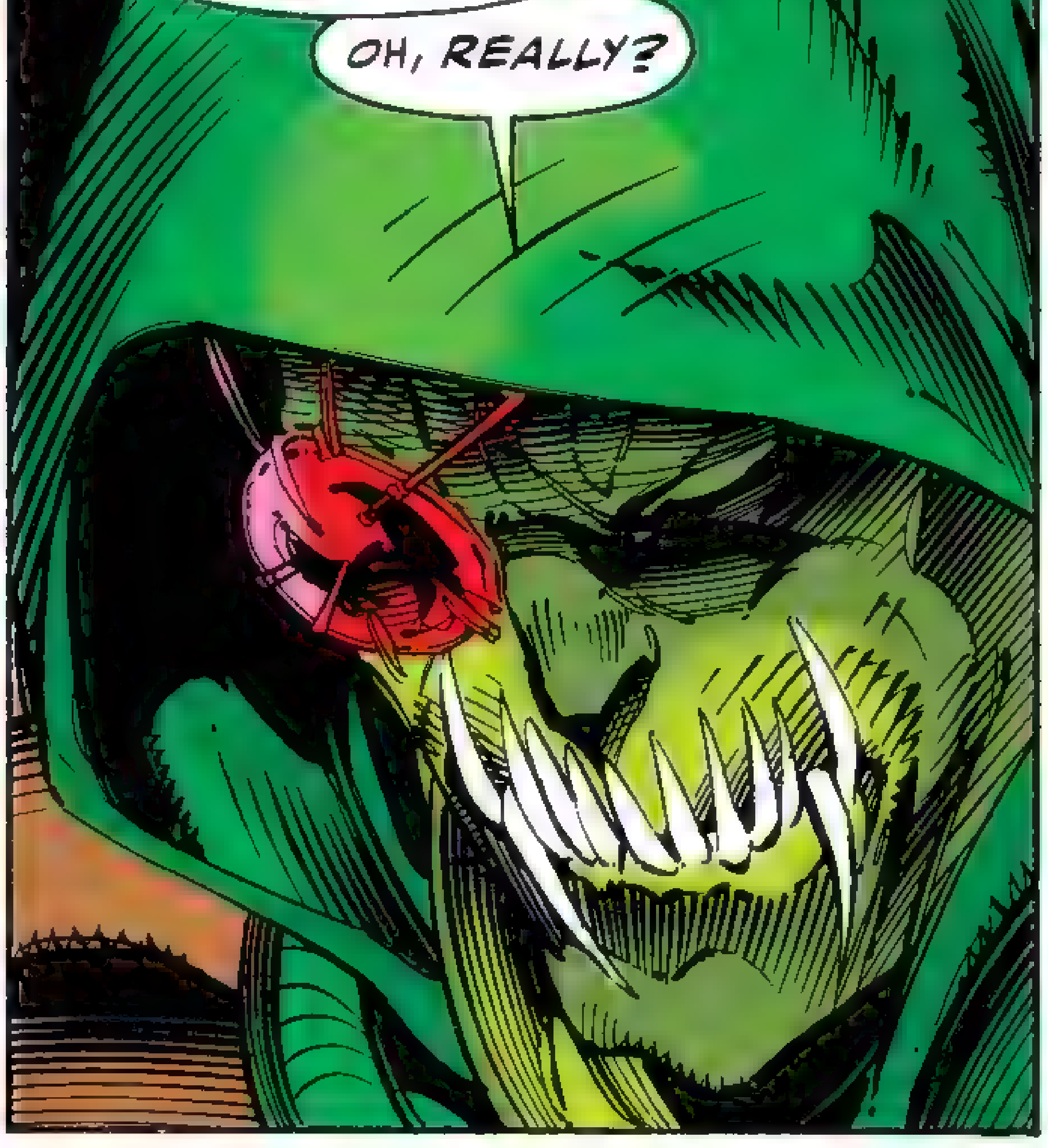
...AND MATSU'O TSURAYABA FINDS HIMSELF VICTIM TO THE ARTISTRY OF THE OTHERS.
SHRIPP!
NYARRGHM!
NYOIRIN IS *FAR* MORE DEVIOUS THAN I GAVE HIM CREDIT FOR BEING.
TO HAVE TAKEN SUCH CAREFULLY SCULPTED PLANS AND TURNED THEM ON ITS CREATOR.
WE CARE *NOTHING* FOR NYOIRIN'S QUEST TO CONTROL THE JIGOKU.
WE CAME *ONLY* TO LEARN WHAT YOU DID TO OUR MINDS...!
I DID *NOTHING*--
--I MERELY TOOK THE LUMP OF *CLAY* PRESENTED BEFORE ME IN THE FORM OF PSYLOCKE--
--AS NYOIRIN MOLDED *YOU*, REVANCHE--
--AND *TOGETHER*, WE SCULPTED YOU BOTH INTO SOMETHING *NEW*--
--INTO SOMETHING *BETTER*-- THAN THE SUM OF YOUR PARTS.
TELL ME TRUTHFULLY, THAT EACH OF YOU DOES NOT SECRETLY *THRILL*--
--AT THE *COMBINATION* YOU HAVE NOW BECOME?
PERHAPS WE *DO*, MATSU'O...
FASHASH
"...ALLOW US TO SHOW YOU JUST HOW *MUCH*..."
AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA*


THE SMELL OF OZONE WAFTS ON COOL BREEZES AS HOT PLASMA TEARS THROUGH THE COLD AFTERNOON AIR--
--AND THE DARK RIDERS QUICKLY COME TO THE PAINFUL REALIZATION--
--THAT THEY MAY HAVE COME ACROSS A TEST SUBJECT WHO COULD TEACH THEM A LESSON OR TWO IN SURVIVAL!
YOU IDIOTS--! MY GLASSES!
ZZARK!
WITHOUT THEM, I CAN'T CONTROL MY OPTIC BLASTS--
SO IT WOULD APPEAR, HUH?
I GUESS, IN OUR ENTHUSIASM, WE'VE KIND OF SET OURSELVES UP FOR SOME SERIOUS BRUISING, HUH?
ZZARKKK!
WORSE THAN THAT--
--UNCHECKED, I COULD POUND ALL OF YOU INTO PULP!
NO KIDDIN'.
HERE, SUMMERS, I FOUND YOUR GLASSES.
LOOKS LIKE THE TEST IS OVER.
WHAT--?

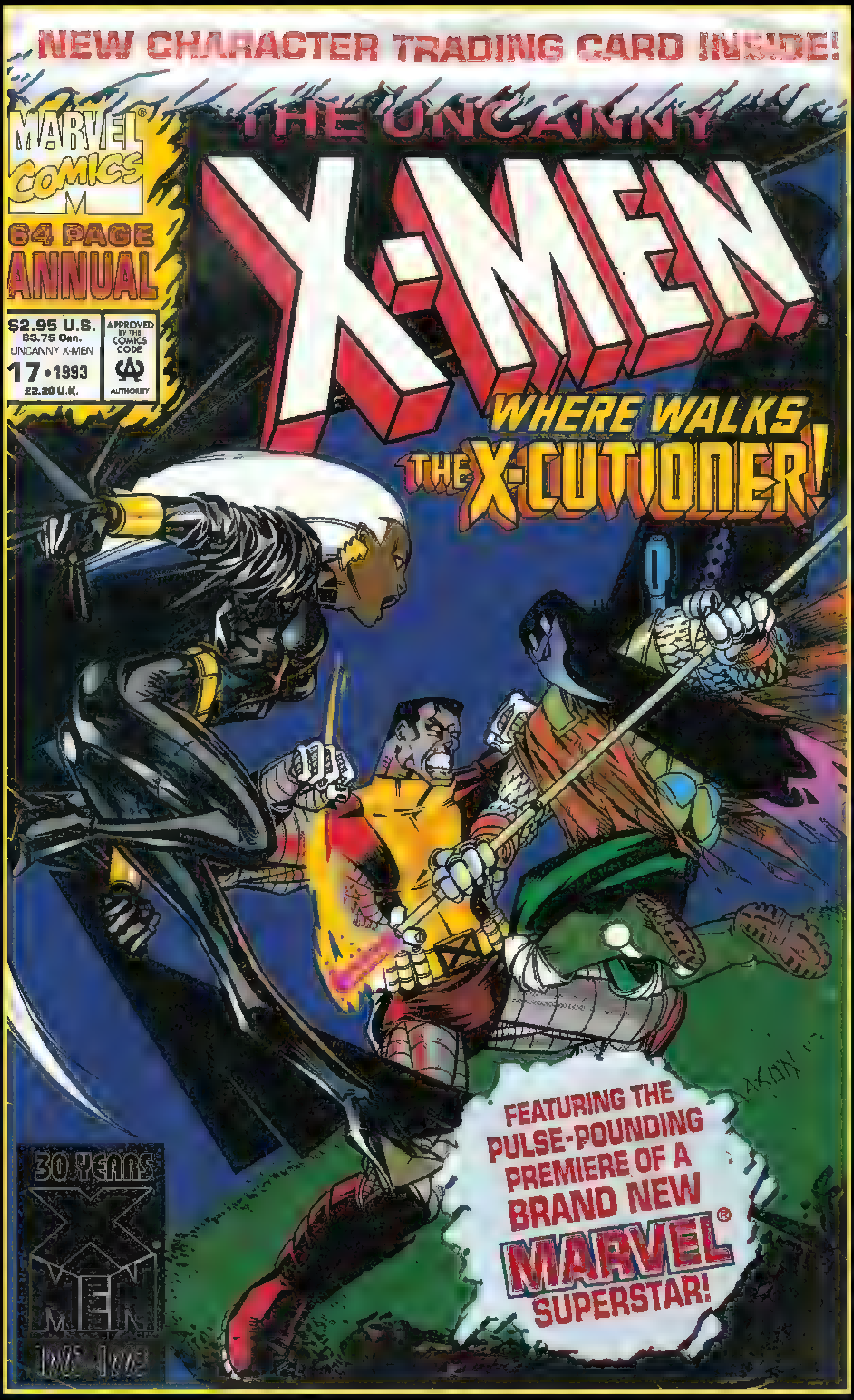
HARDRIVE IS HERE.
THE TEST IS COMPLETED, DARK RIDERS.
THE SUBJECT HAS *PASSED.*
WELL, *THAT'S* A FIRST. YOU *SURE,* HD?
THAT'S *IT?!*
WE FIGHT FOR FIFTEEN MINUTES AND YOU SAY IT'S ALL OVER?!
YOU HAVE BEEN DEEMED *WORTHY* OF FACING THE COMING *STORM,* SCOTT SUMMERS.
THE STORM APOCALYPSE KEPT MENTIONING--?
HE'S *DEAD,* RIDERS! AND HIS PROPHECIES SHOULD HAVE DIED WITH HIM!
YET YOU KEEP FIGHTING FOR THE SAKE OF *HIS* TWISTED IDEALS--
--AND YOU MAKE *ME* A PAWN IN YOUR SICK, TWISTED GAME OF CHESS!
YOU *WANT* TO PLAY, SUMMERS. YOU *KNOW* YOU WANT TO PLAY!
WHEN THE CONFLAGRATION *DOES* COME SCOTT SUMMERS--
--WHEN THE BATTLE FOR *ASCENSION* OF *THE HIGH LORD* COMMENCES--


--YOU WILL BE AT THE FOREFRONT OF THE *KILLING FIELDS!*
YOU LUCKY DOG, YOU...
YOU'RE TALKING IN RIDDLES.
BOTH STRYFE AND APOCALYPSE TALKED ABOUT THE HIGH LORD ASCENSIONS. BUT... *WHAT* IS THAT--?


SOME KIND OF *"KING OF THE WORLD"* CONTEST?
IF ANY OF THIS FIGHTING DOES COME TO PASS, IT'LL BE BECAUSE OF *INSANITY* LIKE YOURS!


OH, *REALLY?*

I WAS FORCED TO SEND MY SON INTO THE FUTURE BECAUSE OF YOU! MY INNOCENT CHILD, RIDERS! YOU TOOK HIM FROM ME...
...AND BECAUSE OF YOU, HE BECAME TWISTED AND SICK!
HIS GOAL WAS TO SEE APOCALYPSE, YOU, ME-- EVERYONE AND EVERYTHING-- DEAD!
DIDN'T YOU REALIZE THE ACTIONS YOU TOOK--
--WOULD BECOME THE CATALYST TO THE VERY WAR YOU'RE PREDICTING?
OF COURSE WE DID, SCOTTY... OF COURSE WE DID...
...BUT THAT'S A CONVERSATION FOR ANOTHER DAY...
THE DARK RIDERS TELEPORT AWAY, AND SCOTT, TOO HELPLESS AND TOO NUMB TO STOP THEM, MERELY WATCHES.
HE WOULD CRY OUT IN RAGE, OR CRY WITH GRIEF, BUT THE PAIN SLIDES OVER HIM LIKE AN OLD, COMFORTABLE BLANKET.
AND HE THINKS OF WHAT HE HAS LEARNED THIS DAY.
ABOUT HIS ENEMIES, ABOUT HIMSELF.
THE PAIN AND SADNESS WASH OVER HIM, WARMING HIM LIKE A SOOTHING BALM.
HE'S COME TO EMBRACE THEM BOTH--TO DEPEND ON THEM--TO NEED THEM...
...AND AS HE'S DONE FOR FAR TOO LONG-- SCOTT SUMMERS TURNS TOWARDS HIMSELF FOR SUPPORT.
BUT HE'S TIRED... AND MAYBE, JUST MAYBE, THE TIME HAS COME TO ASK OTHERS TO HELP...
NEXT ISSUE: SCOTT SUMMERS & JEAN GREY: LEGACIES and PROPHECIES!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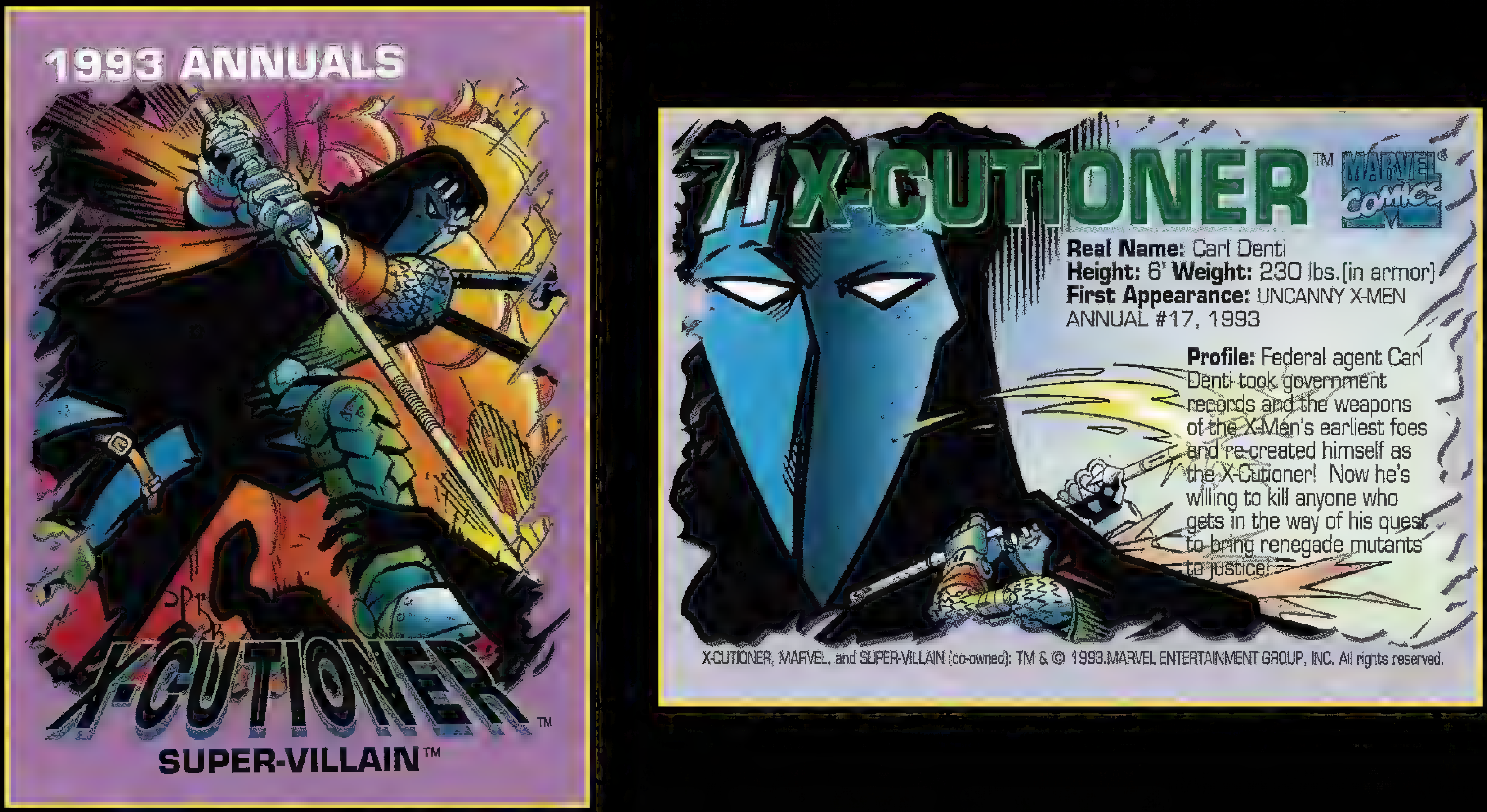
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Real Name: Carl Denti
Height: 6' **Weight:** 230 lbs.(in armor)
First Appearance: UNCANNY X-MEN ANNUAL #17, 1993

Profile: Federal agent Carl Denti took government records and the weapons of the X-Men's earliest foes and re-created himself as the X-Cutioner! Now he's willing to kill anyone who gets in the way of his quest to bring renegade mutants to justice!

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UNCANNY X-MEN ANNUAL #17 TRADING CARD BY JASON PEARSON

NOTE: THIS ISSUE'S BACKUP STORY TAKES PLACE BEFORE *X-MEN UNLIMITED* #1.

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X-MEN
WHERE WALKS THE X-CUTIONER!
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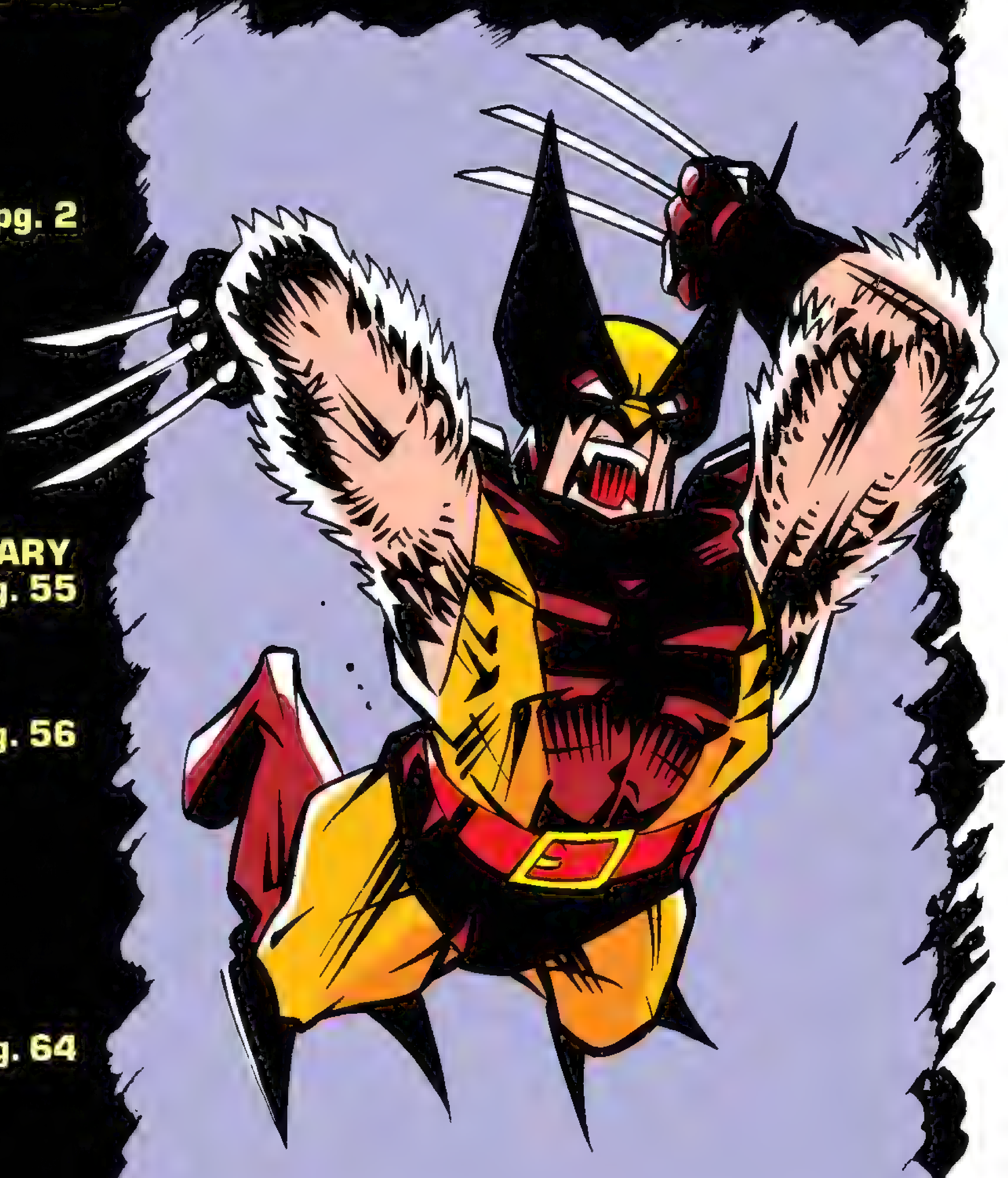
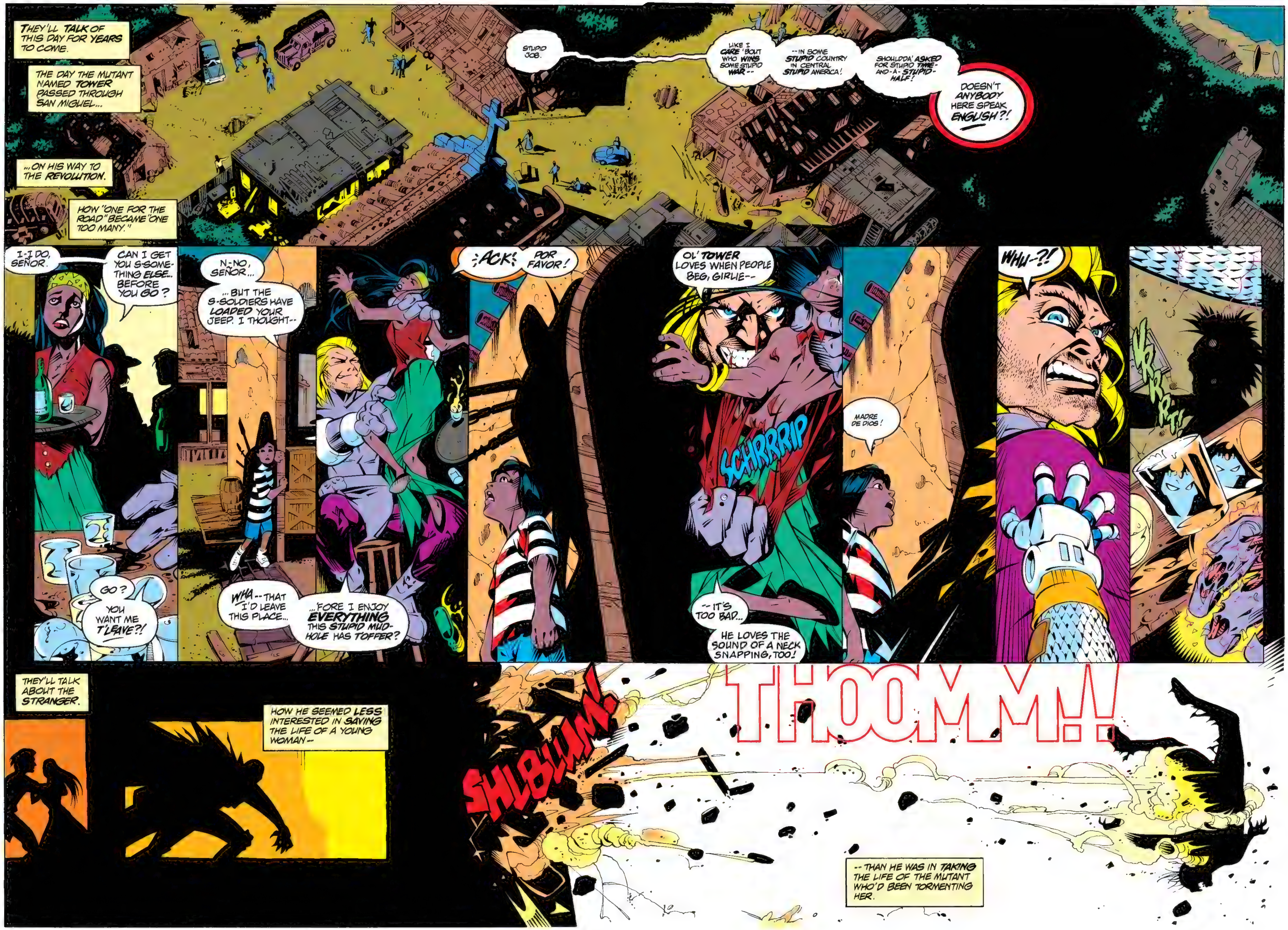
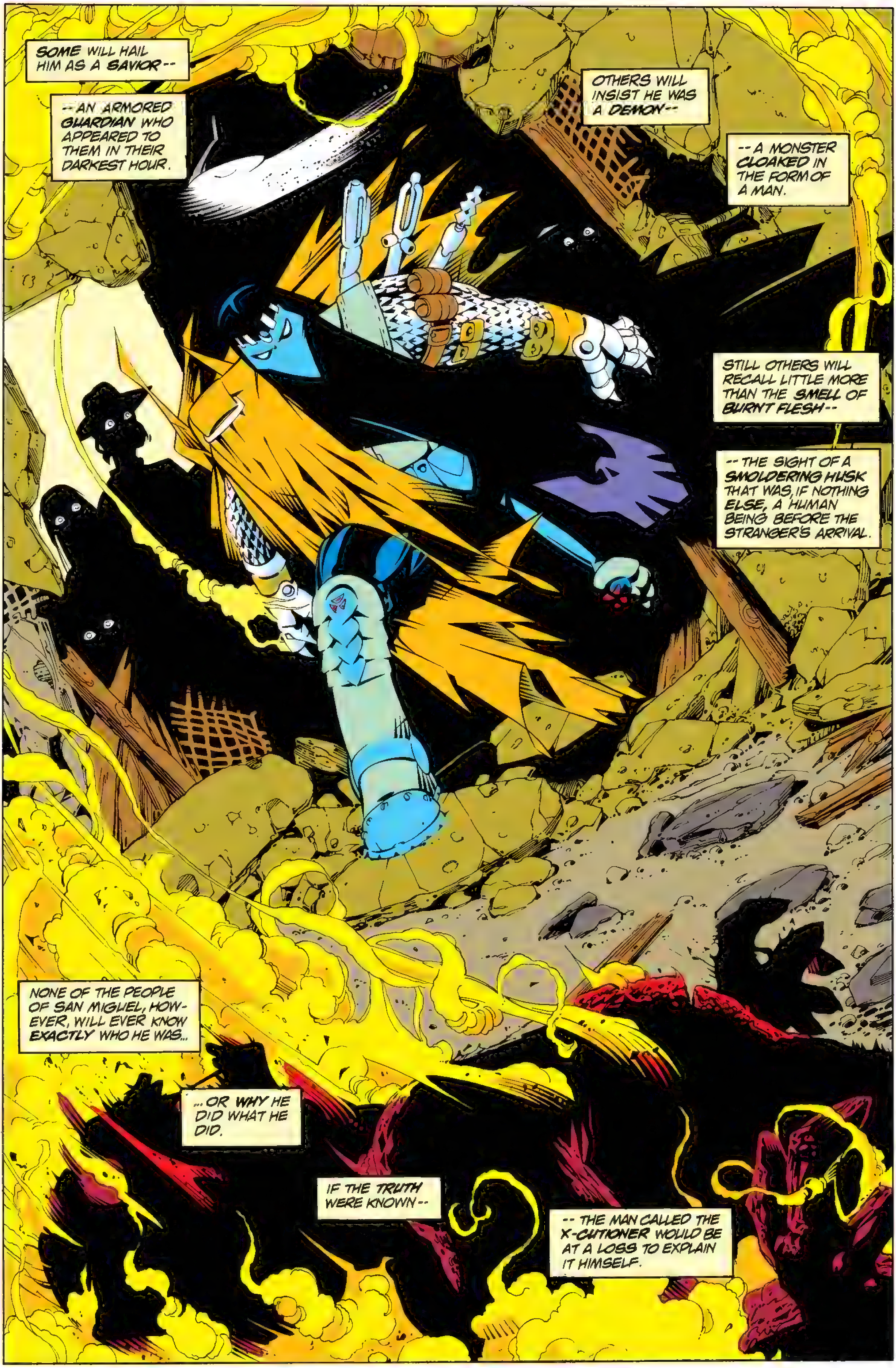
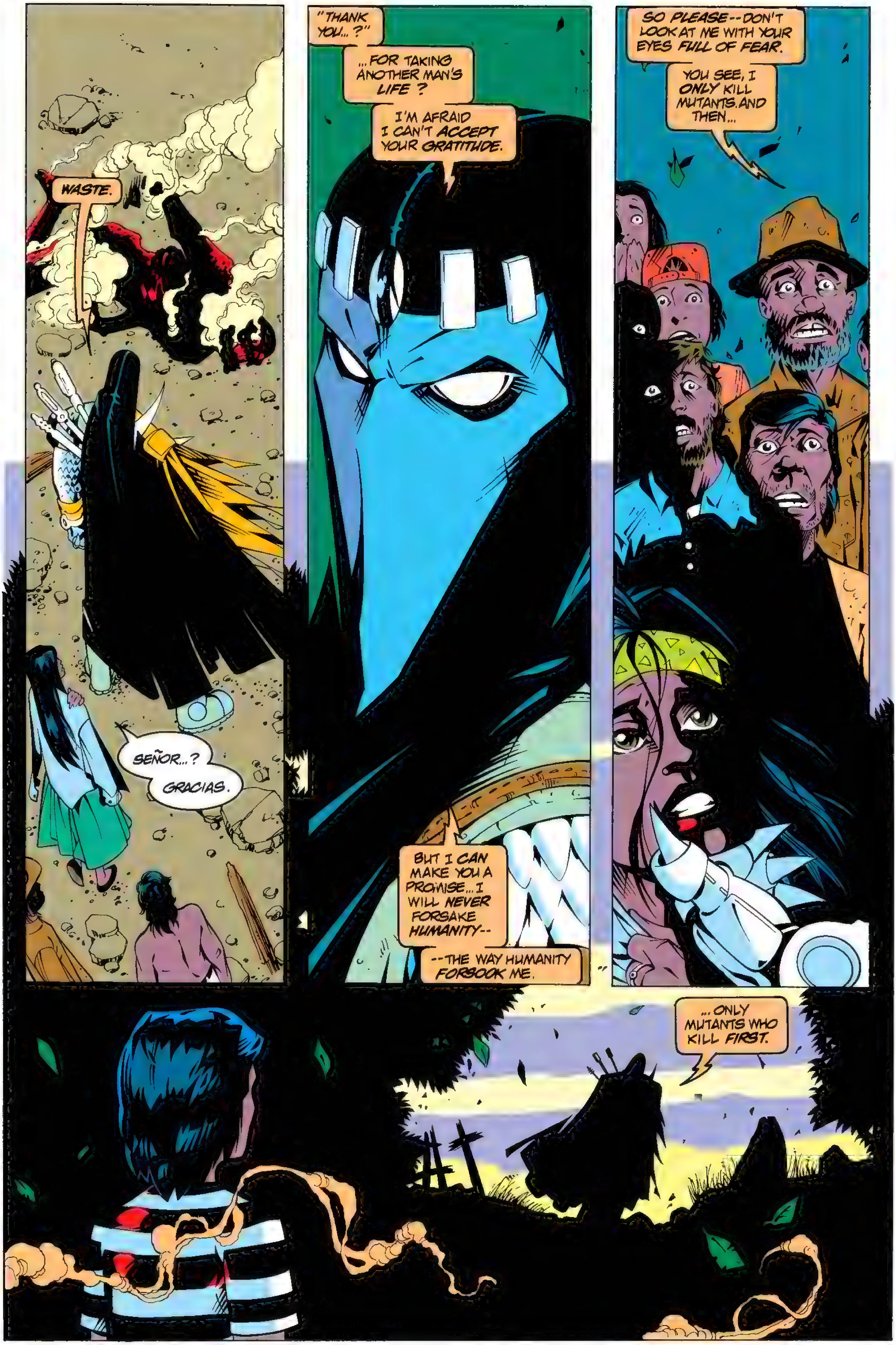
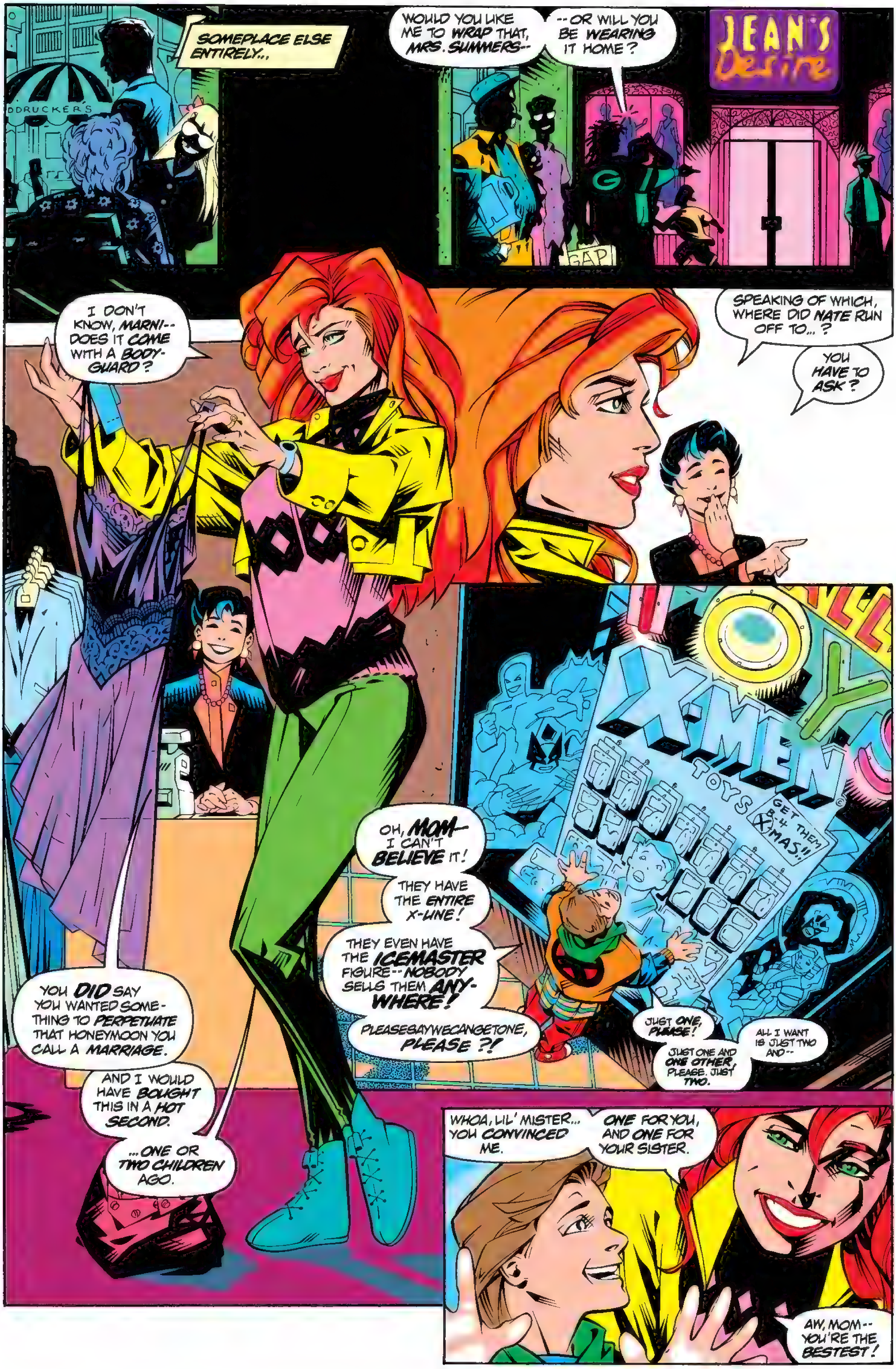


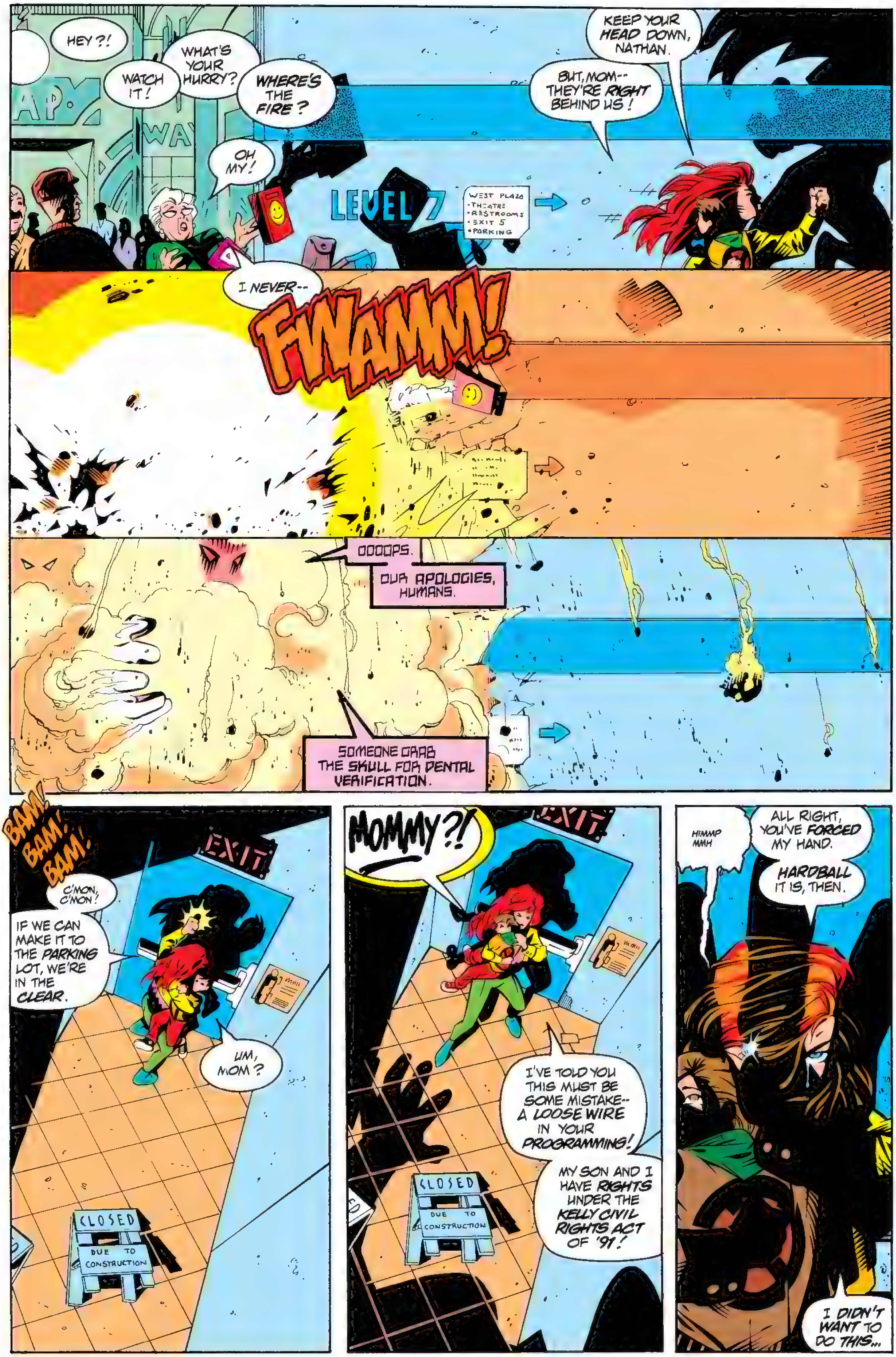

THEY'LL TALK OF THIS DAY FOR YEARS TO COME.
THE DAY THE MUTANT NAMED TOWER PASSED THROUGH SAN MIGUEL...
...ON HIS WAY TO THE REVOLUTION.
HOW "ONE FOR THE ROAD" BECAME "ONE TOO MANY."
STUPID JOB.
LIKE I CARE 'BOUT WHO WINS SOME STUPID WAR--
--IN SOME STUPID COUNTRY IN CENTRAL STUPID AMERICA!
SHOULDDA' ASKED FOR STUPID TIME-AND-A-STUPID-HALF!
DOESN'T ANYBODY HERE SPEAK ENGLISH?!
I-I DO, SEÑOR.
CAN I GET YOU S-SOMETHING ELSE.. BEFORE YOU GO?
GO? YOU WANT ME T'LEAVE?!
N-NO, SEÑOR...
...BUT THE S-SOLDIERS HAVE LOADED YOUR JEEP. I THOUGHT--
WHA--THAT I'D LEAVE THIS PLACE...
...FORE I ENJOY EVERYTHING THIS STUPID MUD-HOLE HAS TOFFER?
¡ACK! ¡POR FAVOR!
OL' TOWER LOVES WHEN PEOPLE BEG, GIRLIE--
SCHRRRIP
--IT'S TOO BAD...
HE LOVES THE SOUND OF A NECK SNAPPING, TOO!
MADRE DE DIOS!
WHU-?!
VRRRT!
THEY'LL TALK ABOUT THE STRANGER.
HOW HE SEEMED LESS INTERESTED IN SAVING THE LIFE OF A YOUNG WOMAN--
SHLBLUM!
THOOMM!!
--THAN HE WAS IN TAKING THE LIFE OF THE MUTANT WHO'D BEEN TORMENTING HER.

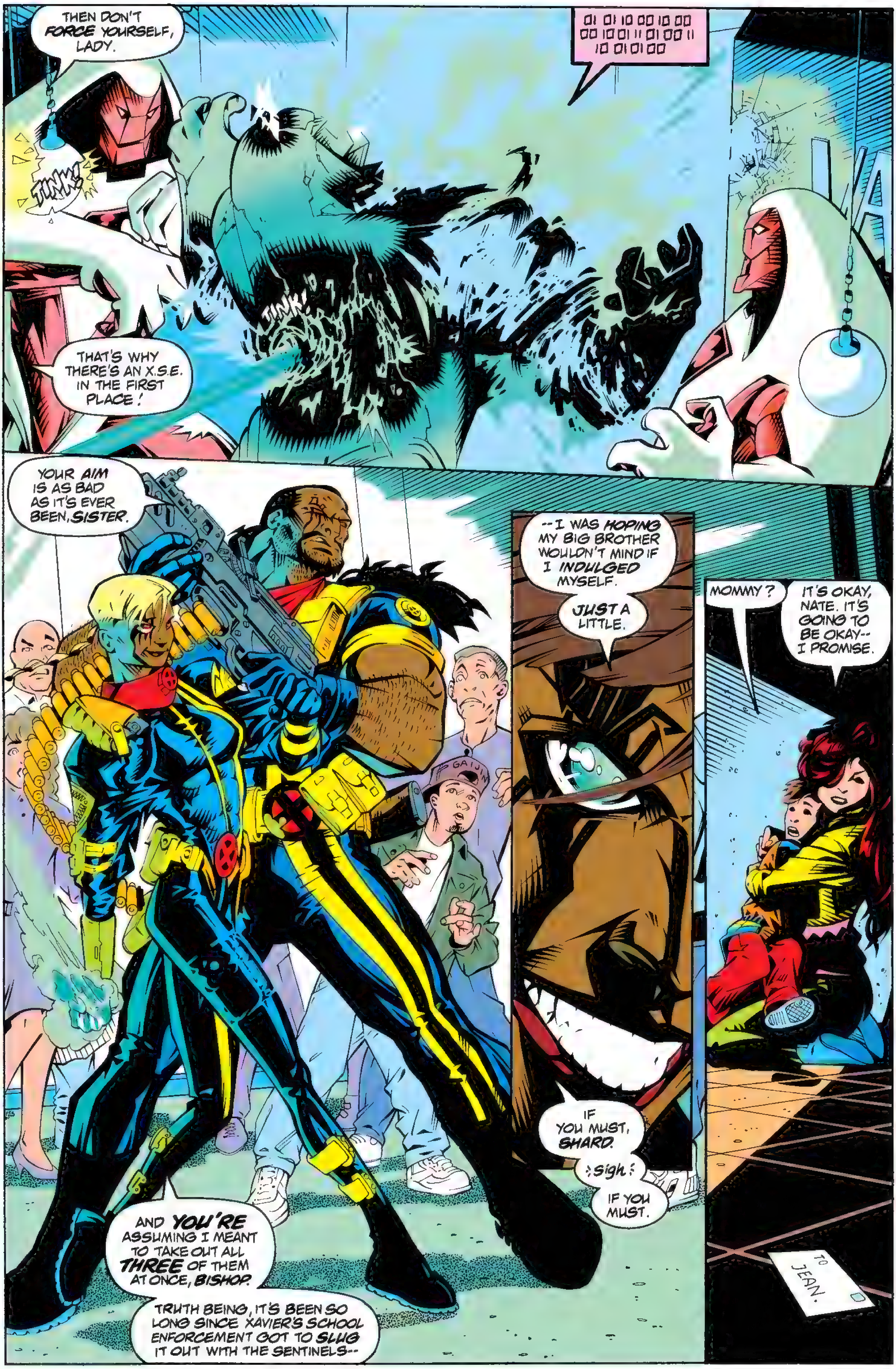

SOME WILL HAIL HIM AS A SAVIOR--
--AN ARMORED GUARDIAN WHO APPEARED TO THEM IN THEIR DARKEST HOUR.
OTHERS WILL INSIST HE WAS A DEMON--
--A MONSTER CLOAKED IN THE FORM OF A MAN.
STILL OTHERS WILL RECALL LITTLE MORE THAN THE SMELL OF BURNT FLESH--
--THE SIGHT OF A SMOLDERING HUSK THAT WAS, IF NOTHING ELSE, A HUMAN BEING BEFORE THE STRANGER'S ARRIVAL.
NONE OF THE PEOPLE OF SAN MIGUEL, HOWEVER, WILL EVER KNOW EXACTLY WHO HE WAS...
...OR WHY HE DID WHAT HE DID.
IF THE TRUTH WERE KNOWN--
-- THE MAN CALLED THE X-CUTIONER WOULD BE AT A LOSS TO EXPLAIN IT HIMSELF.

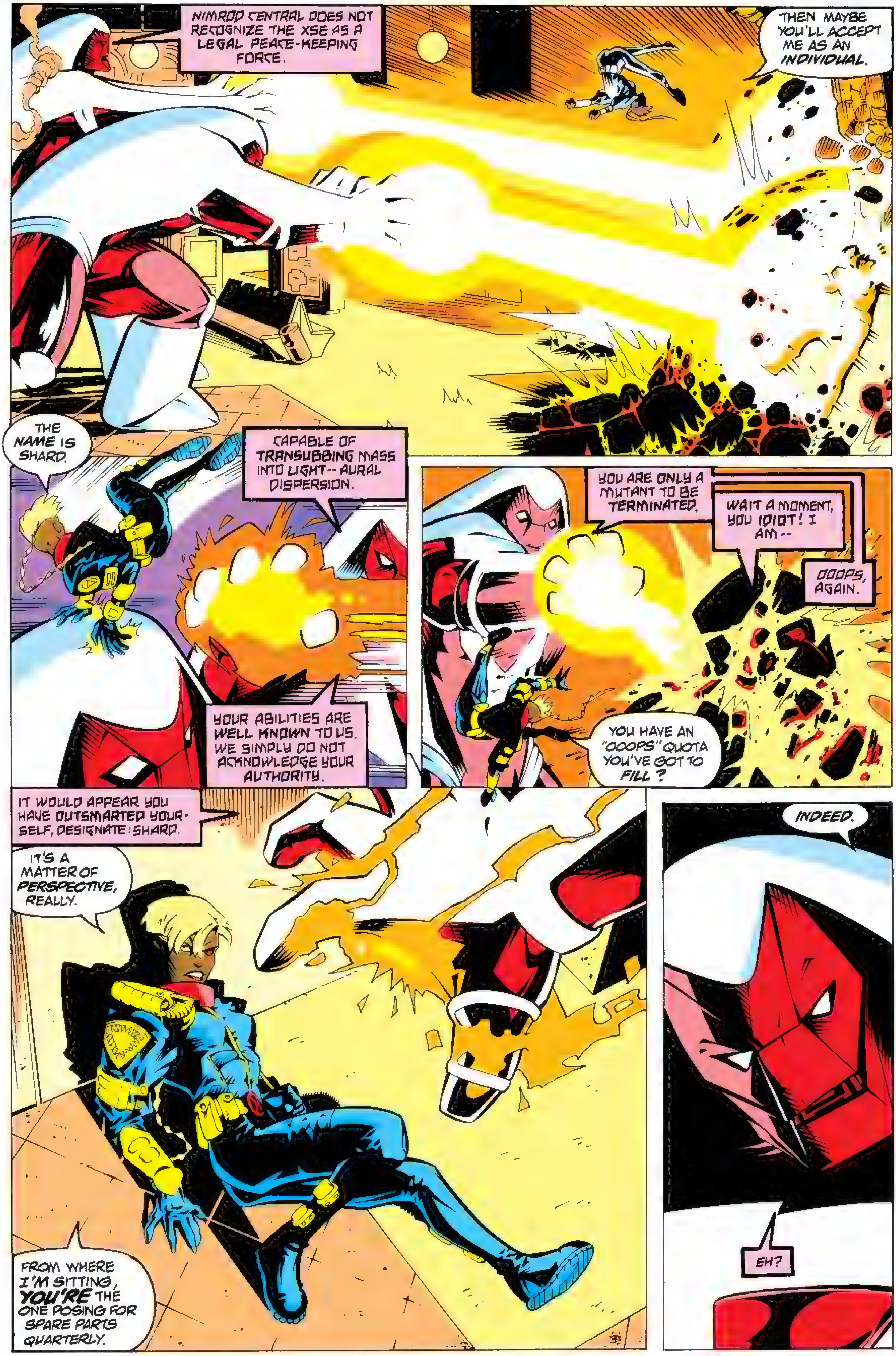

WASTE.
SEÑOR...? GRACIAS.
"THANK YOU...?"
...FOR TAKING ANOTHER MAN'S LIFE?
I'M AFRAID I CAN'T ACCEPT YOUR GRATITUDE.
BUT I CAN MAKE YOU A PROMISE... I WILL NEVER FORSAKE HUMANITY--
--THE WAY HUMANITY FORSOOK ME.
SO PLEASE--DON'T LOOK AT ME WITH YOUR EYES FULL OF FEAR.
YOU SEE, I ONLY KILL MUTANTS. AND THEN...
...ONLY MUTANTS WHO KILL FIRST.

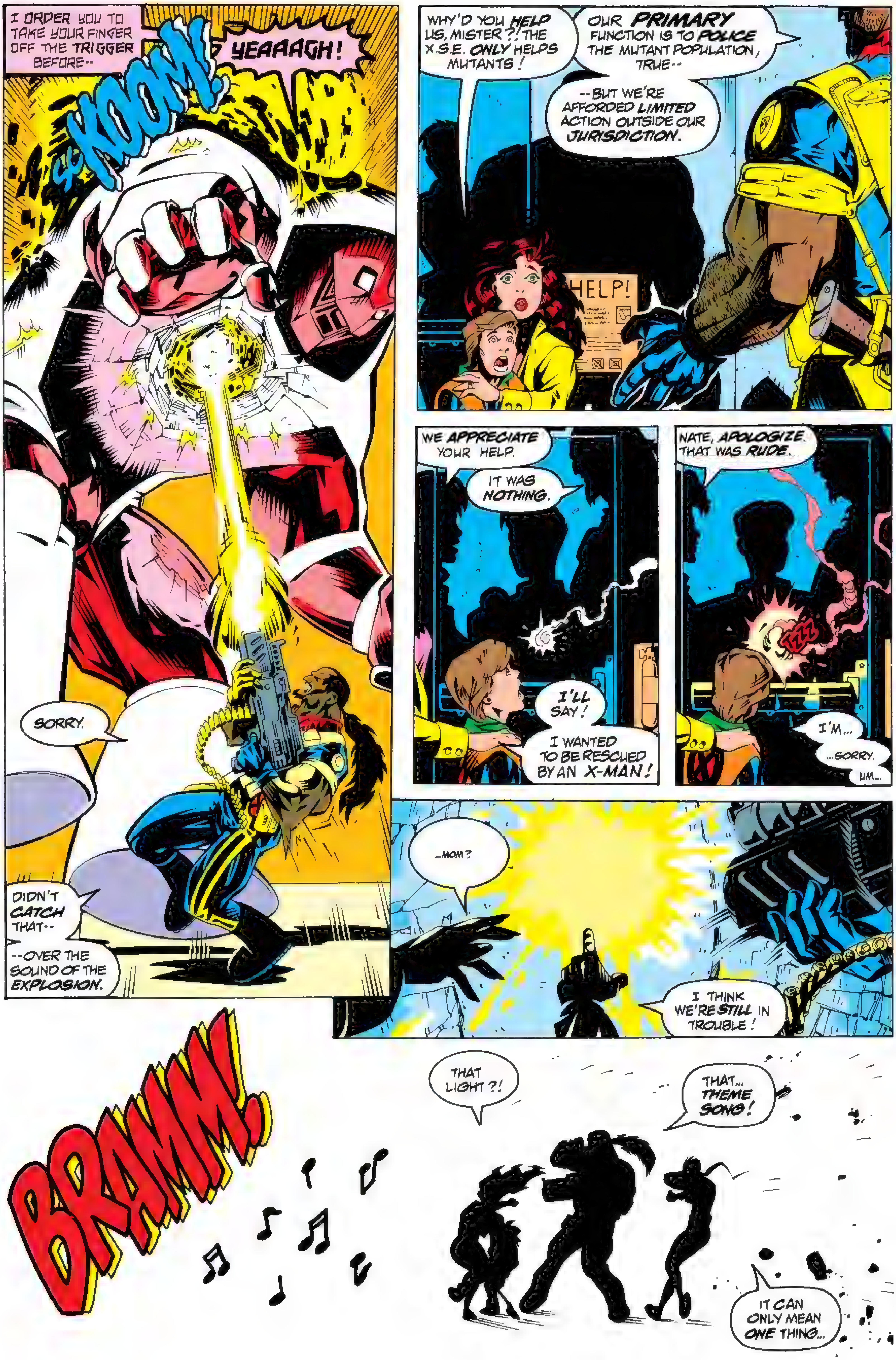

SOMEPLACE ELSE ENTIRELY...
DDRUCKER'S
WOULD YOU LIKE ME TO WRAP THAT, MRS. SUMMERS--
--OR WILL YOU BE WEARING IT HOME?
JEAN'S Desire
GAP
I DON'T KNOW, MARNI--DOES IT COME WITH A BODY-GUARD?
SPEAKING OF WHICH, WHERE DID NATE RUN OFF TO... ?
YOU HAVE TO ASK?
X-MEN TOYS
GET THEM B-4 X-MAS!!
OH, MOM--I CAN'T BELIEVE IT!
THEY HAVE THE ENTIRE X-LINE!
THEY EVEN HAVE THE ICEMASTER FIGURE--NOBODY SELLS THEM ANYWHERE!
PLEASESAYWECANGETONE, PLEASE ?!
JUST ONE, PLEASE!
JUST ONE AND ONE OTHER, PLEASE. JUST TWO.
ALL I WANT IS JUST TWO AND--
YOU DID SAY YOU WANTED SOMETHING TO PERPETUATE THAT HONEYMOON YOU CALL A MARRIAGE.
AND I WOULD HAVE BOUGHT THIS IN A HOT SECOND.
...ONE OR TWO CHILDREN AGO.
WHOA, LIL' MISTER... YOU CONVINCED ME.
ONE FOR YOU, AND ONE FOR YOUR SISTER.
AW, MOM--YOU'RE THE BESTEST!

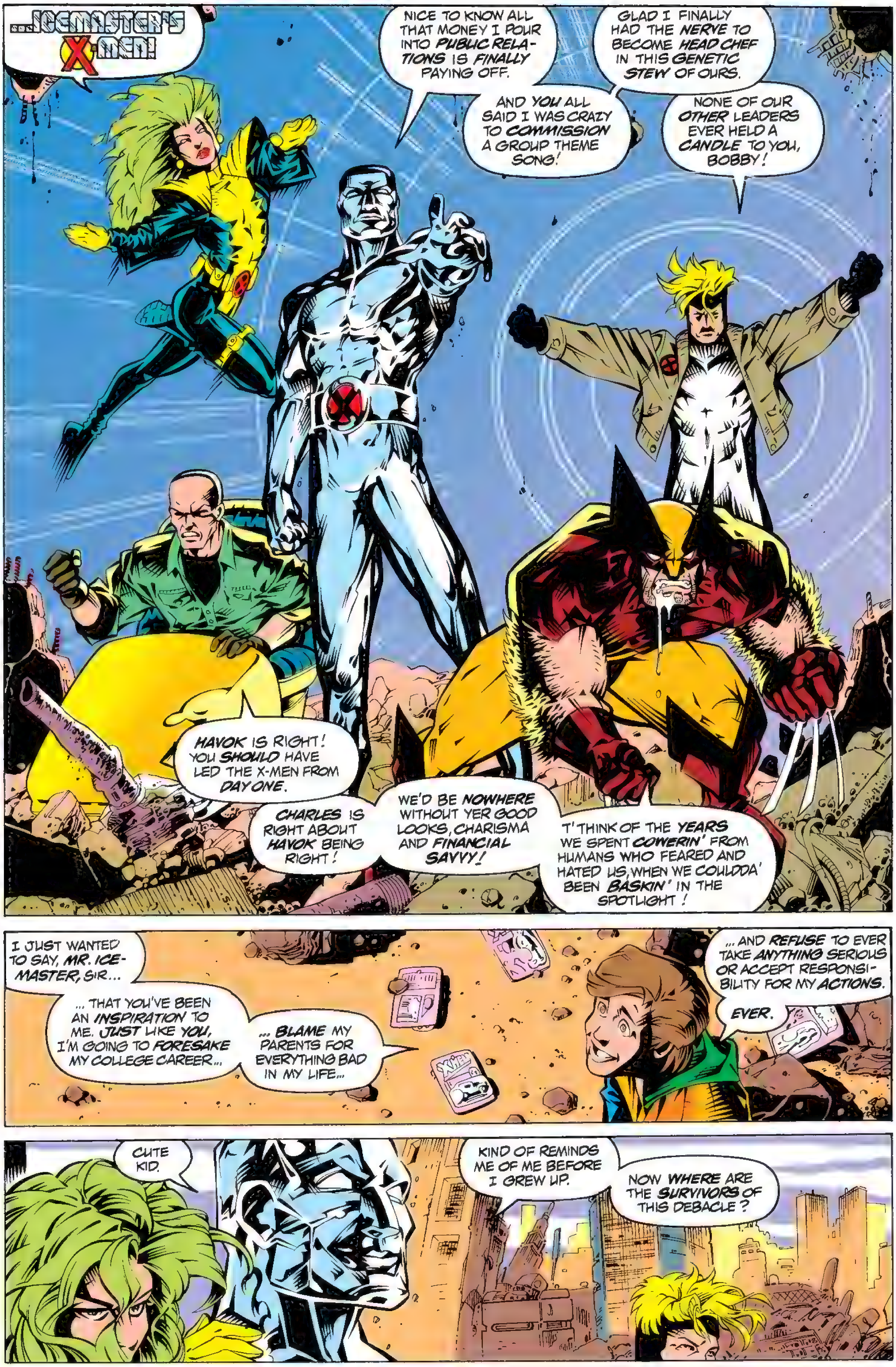
"BESTEST" IS NOT A WORD.
SKRASHK!
BAD GRAMMAR IS THE LEAST OF HIS SINS.
DESIGNATE: NATHAN CHRISTOPHER SUMMERS IS A LATENT MUTANT.
MUST BE TERMINATED PRIOR TO FRUITION OF BIOLOGICAL PARAMETERS.
M-MOM... THEY THINK I'M A MUTANT!
PLEASE-- THIS IS SOME MISTAKE!
IF HE WERE A MUTANT, WE WOULD HAVE REGISTERED HIM AT BIRTH WITH THE XAVIER INSTITUTE.
AN "OVERSIGHT"...
...EASILY CORRECTED.
MOMMM?!
I'VE GOT YOU, NATHAN!
THOUGH I HAVE NO IDEA WHAT I CAN POSSIBLY DO TO SAVE YOU FROM THESE SENTINELS!
I DON'T HAVE THE SKILLS TO FEND OFF A TRIO OF GOVERNMENT-ISSUED NIMRODS.

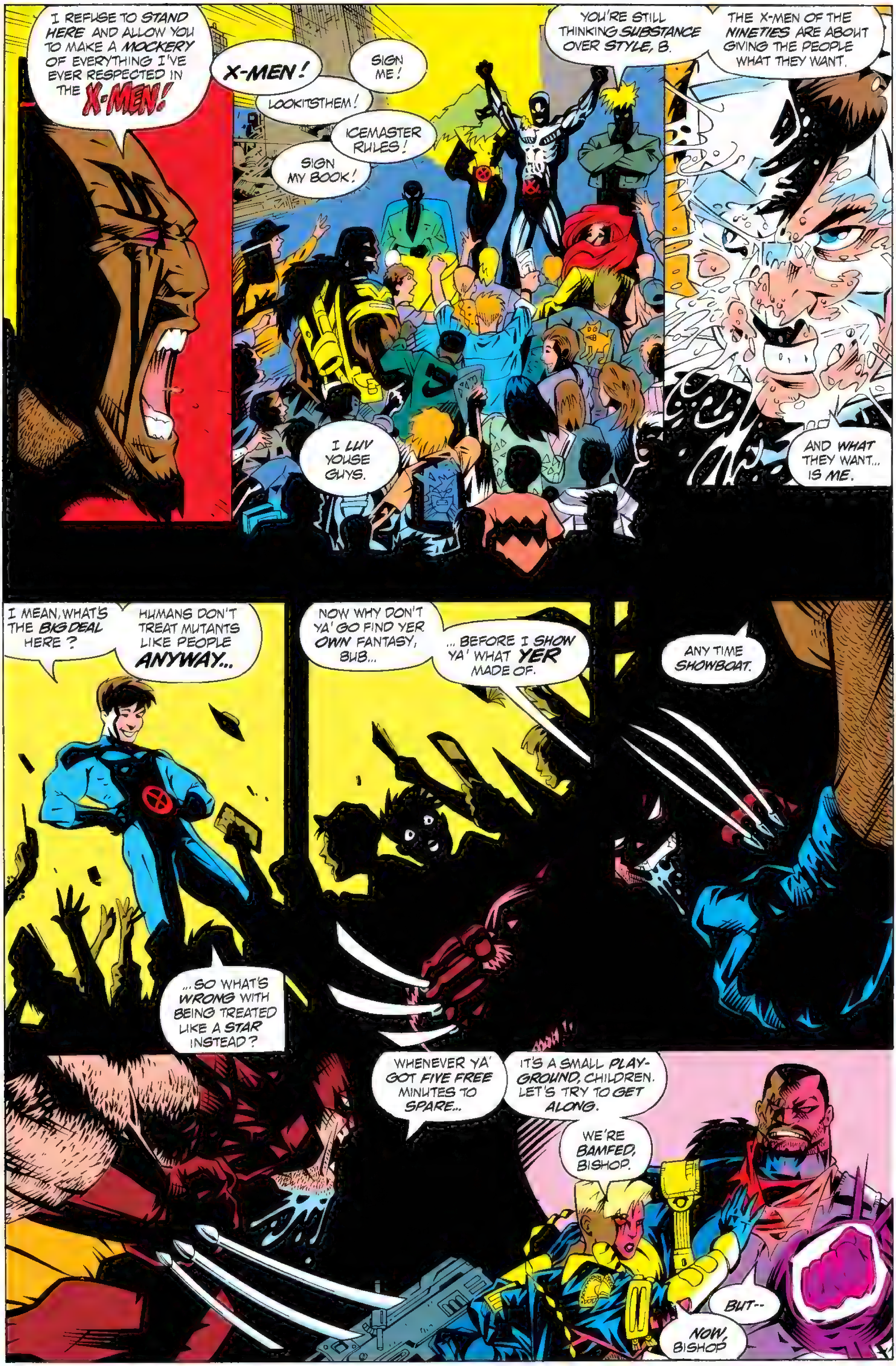

HEY?!
WATCH IT!
WHAT'S YOUR HURRY?
WHERE'S THE FIRE?
OH MY!
KEEP YOUR HEAD DOWN, NATHAN.
BUT, MOM-- THEY'RE RIGHT BEHIND US!
LEVEL 7
WEST PLAZA
• THEATRE
• RESTROOMS
• EXIT 5
• PARKING
I NEVER--
FWAMM!
OOOOPS.
OUR APOLOGIES, HUMANS.
SOMEONE GRAB THE SKULL FOR DENTAL VERIFICATION.
BAM! BAM! BAM!
EXIT
C'MON, C'MON!
IF WE CAN MAKE IT TO THE PARKING LOT, WE'RE IN THE CLEAR.
UM, MOM?
CLOSED
DUE TO CONSTRUCTION
MOMMY?!
EXIT
I'VE TOLD YOU THIS MUST BE SOME MISTAKE-- A LOOSE WIRE IN YOUR PROGRAMMING!
MY SON AND I HAVE RIGHTS UNDER THE KELLY CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF '91!
CLOSED
DUE TO CONSTRUCTION
HMMP MMH
ALL RIGHT, YOU'VE FORCED MY HAND.
HARDBALL IT IS, THEN.
I DIDN'T WANT TO DO THIS...

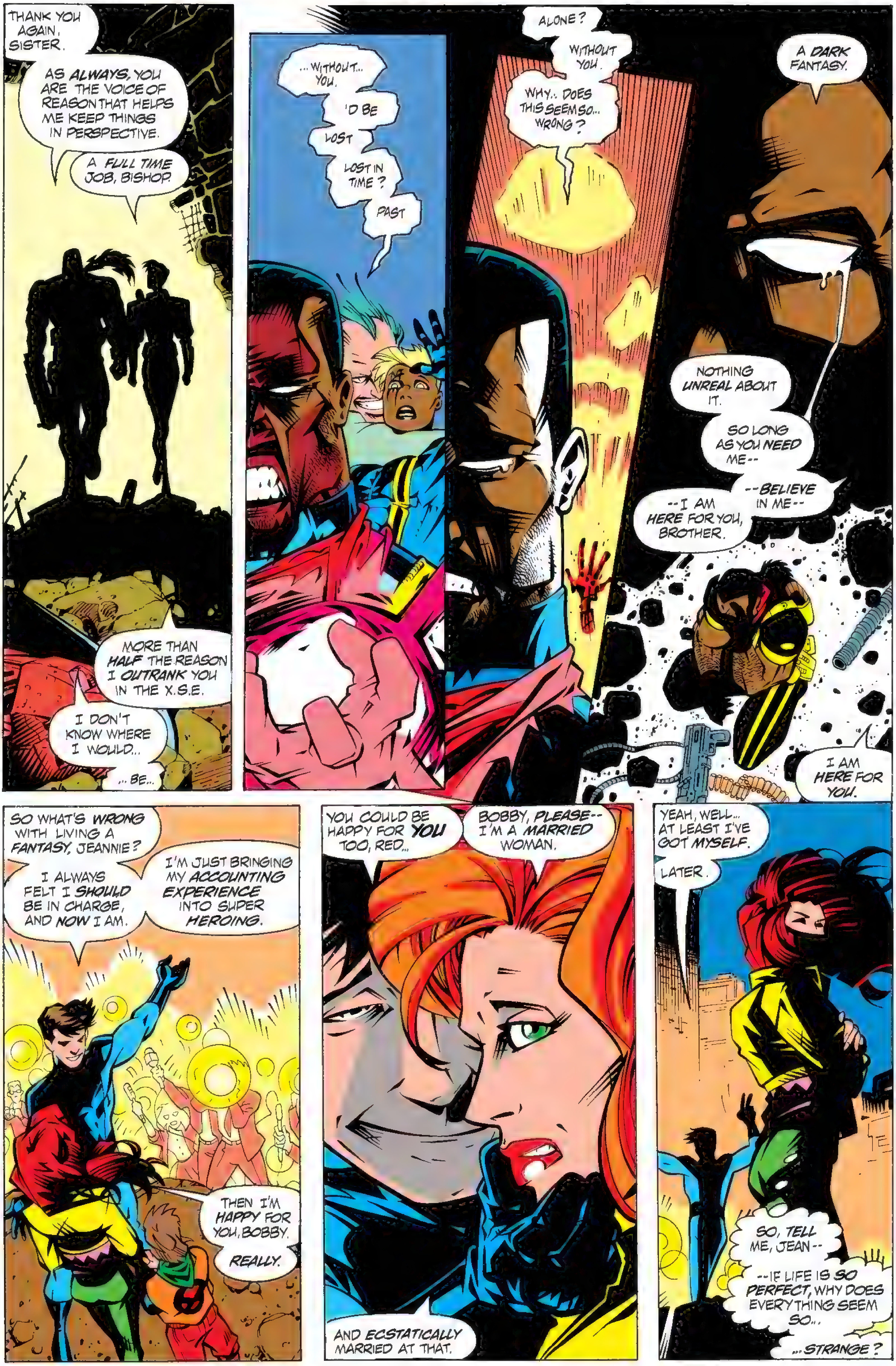

THEN DON'T *FORCE* YOURSELF, LADY.
TINK!
01 01 10 00 10 00 00 10 01 11 01 00 11 10 01 01 00
TINK!
THAT'S WHY THERE'S AN X.S.E. IN THE FIRST PLACE!
YOUR *AIM* IS AS BAD AS IT'S EVER BEEN, *SISTER*.
--I WAS *HOPING* MY BIG BROTHER WOULDN'T MIND IF I *INDULGED* MYSELF.
JUST A LITTLE.
IF YOU MUST, *SHARD*.
:sigh:
IF YOU MUST.
AND *YOU'RE* ASSUMING I MEANT TO TAKE OUT ALL *THREE* OF THEM AT ONCE, *BISHOP*.
TRUTH BEING, IT'S BEEN SO LONG SINCE XAVIER'S SCHOOL ENFORCEMENT GOT TO *SLUG* IT OUT WITH THE SENTINELS--
GAIJIN
MOMMY?
IT'S OKAY, NATE. IT'S GOING TO BE OKAY-- I PROMISE.
TO JEAN.

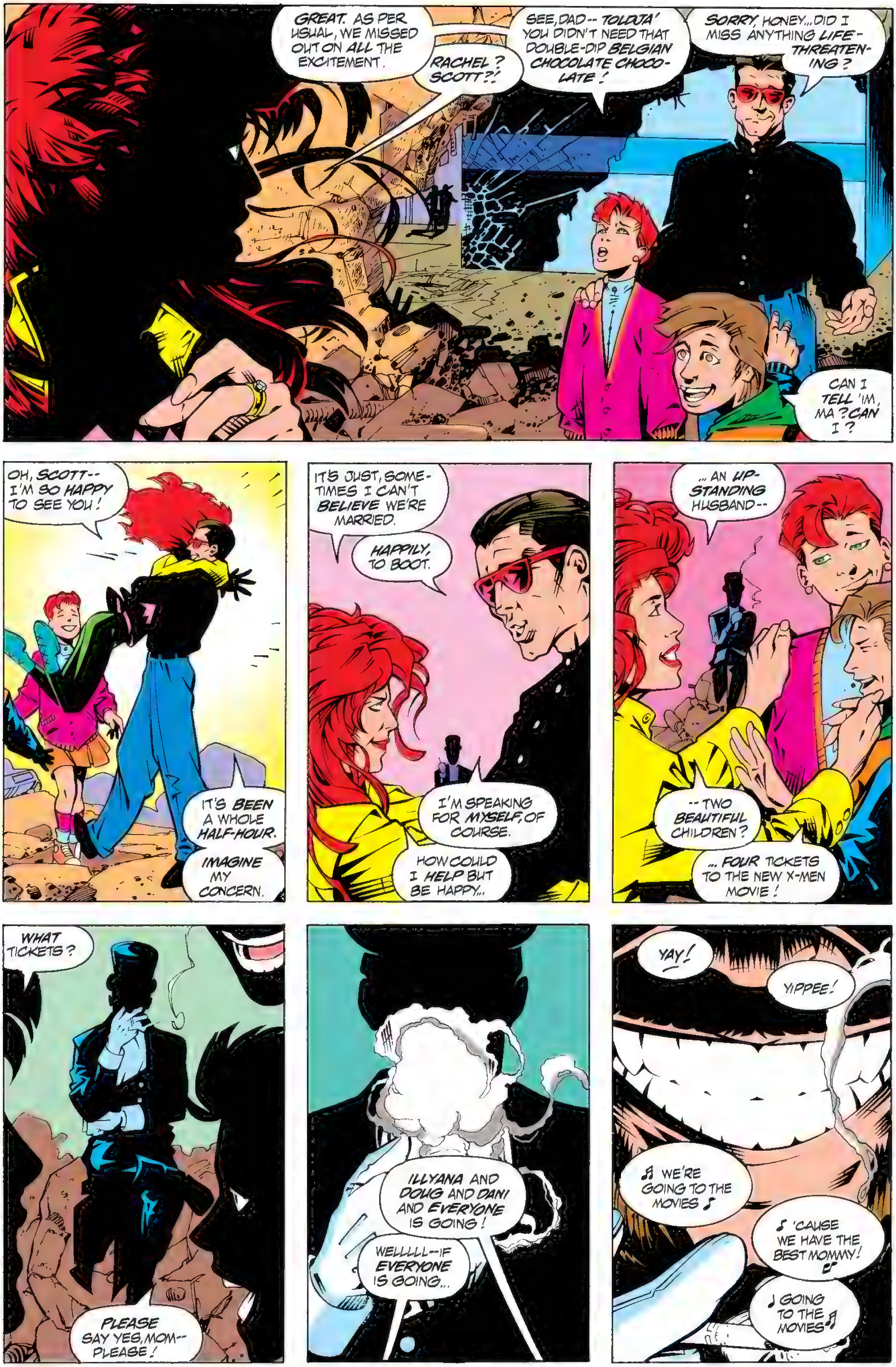

NIMROD CENTRAL DOES NOT RECOGNIZE THE XSE AS A LEGAL PEACE-KEEPING FORCE.
THEN MAYBE YOU'LL ACCEPT ME AS AN INDIVIDUAL.
THE NAME IS SHARD.
CAPABLE OF TRANSUBBING MASS INTO LIGHT-- AURAL DISPERSION.
YOUR ABILITIES ARE WELL KNOWN TO US. WE SIMPLY DO NOT ACKNOWLEDGE YOUR AUTHORITY.
YOU ARE ONLY A MUTANT TO BE TERMINATED.
WAIT A MOMENT, YOU IDIOT! I AM --
OOOPS, AGAIN.
YOU HAVE AN "OOOPS" QUOTA YOU'VE GOT TO FILL?
IT WOULD APPEAR YOU HAVE OUTSMARTED YOURSELF, DESIGNATE: SHARD.
IT'S A MATTER OF PERSPECTIVE, REALLY.
FROM WHERE I'M SITTING, YOU'RE THE ONE POSING FOR SPARE PARTS QUARTERLY.
INDEED.
EH?

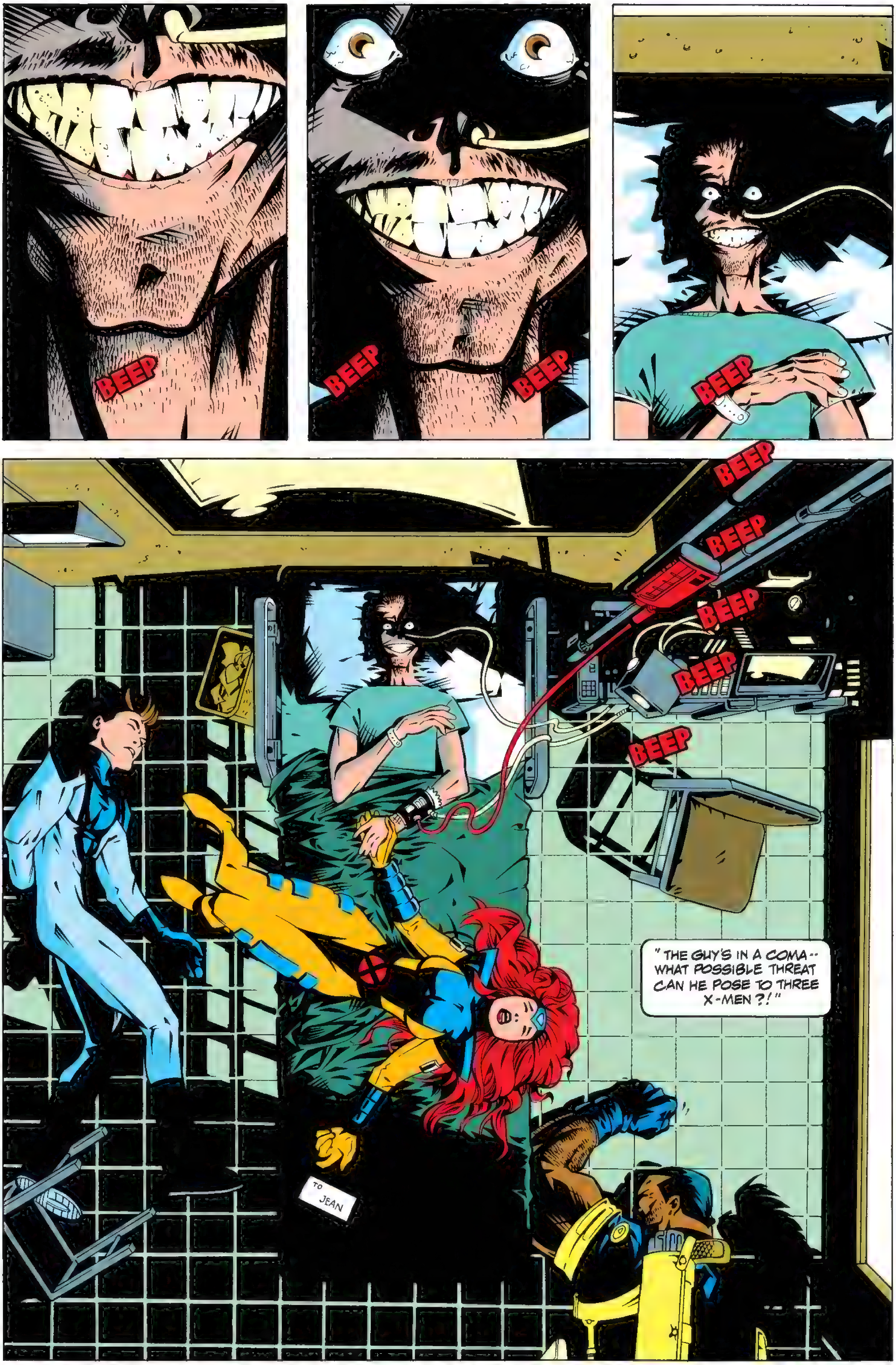

I ORDER YOU TO TAKE YOUR FINGER OFF THE TRIGGER BEFORE--
SKOOM!
YEAAAGH!
SORRY.
DIDN'T CATCH THAT--
--OVER THE SOUND OF THE EXPLOSION.
WHY'D YOU HELP US, MISTER ?! THE X.S.E. ONLY HELPS MUTANTS !
OUR PRIMARY FUNCTION IS TO POLICE THE MUTANT POPULATION, TRUE--
--BUT WE'RE AFFORDED LIMITED ACTION OUTSIDE OUR JURISDICTION.
HELP!
WE APPRECIATE YOUR HELP.
IT WAS NOTHING.
I'LL SAY !
I WANTED TO BE RESCUED BY AN X-MAN !
NATE, APOLOGIZE. THAT WAS RUDE.
ZZZ
I'M...
...SORRY.
UM...
...MOM?
I THINK WE'RE STILL IN TROUBLE !
BRAMM!
THAT LIGHT ?!
THAT... THEME SONG !
IT CAN ONLY MEAN ONE THING...

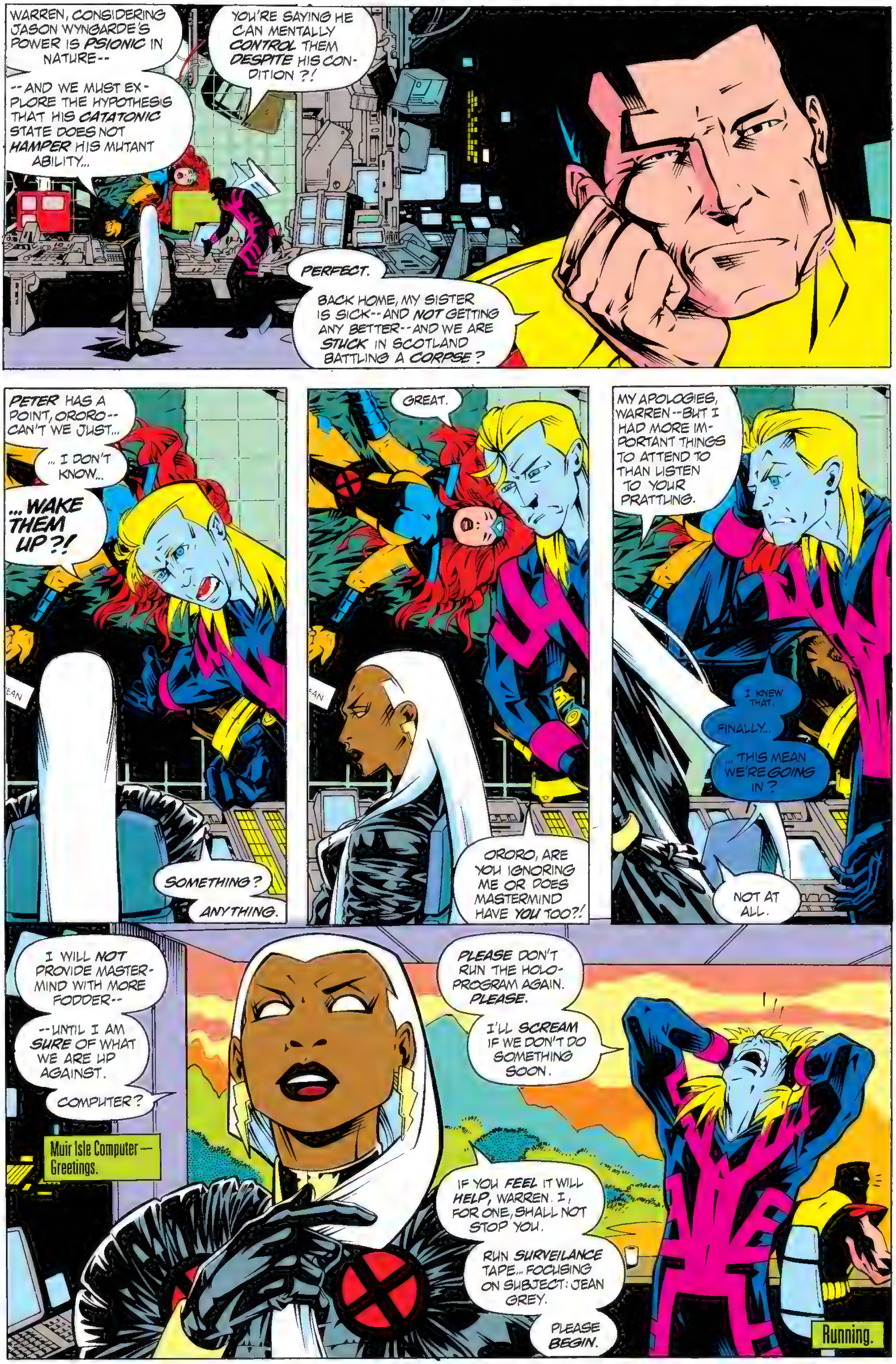

...ICEMASTER'S X-MEN!
NICE TO KNOW ALL THAT MONEY I POUR INTO PUBLIC RELATIONS IS FINALLY PAYING OFF.
GLAD I FINALLY HAD THE NERVE TO BECOME HEAD CHEF IN THIS GENETIC STEW OF OURS.
AND YOU ALL SAID I WAS CRAZY TO COMMISSION A GROUP THEME SONG!
NONE OF OUR OTHER LEADERS EVER HELD A CANDLE TO YOU, BOBBY!
HAVOK IS RIGHT! YOU SHOULD HAVE LED THE X-MEN FROM DAY ONE.
CHARLES IS RIGHT ABOUT HAVOK BEING RIGHT!
WE'D BE NOWHERE WITHOUT YER GOOD LOOKS, CHARISMA AND FINANCIAL SAVVY!
T'THINK OF THE YEARS WE SPENT COWERIN' FROM HUMANS WHO FEARED AND HATED US, WHEN WE COULDDA' BEEN BASKIN' IN THE SPOTLIGHT!
I JUST WANTED TO SAY, MR. ICE-MASTER, SIR...
... THAT YOU'VE BEEN AN INSPIRATION TO ME. JUST LIKE YOU, I'M GOING TO FORESAKE MY COLLEGE CAREER...
... BLAME MY PARENTS FOR EVERYTHING BAD IN MY LIFE...
... AND REFUSE TO EVER TAKE ANYTHING SERIOUS OR ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY FOR MY ACTIONS.
EVER.
X-MEN
CUTE KID.
KIND OF REMINDS ME OF ME BEFORE I GREW UP.
NOW WHERE ARE THE SURVIVORS OF THIS DEBACLE?

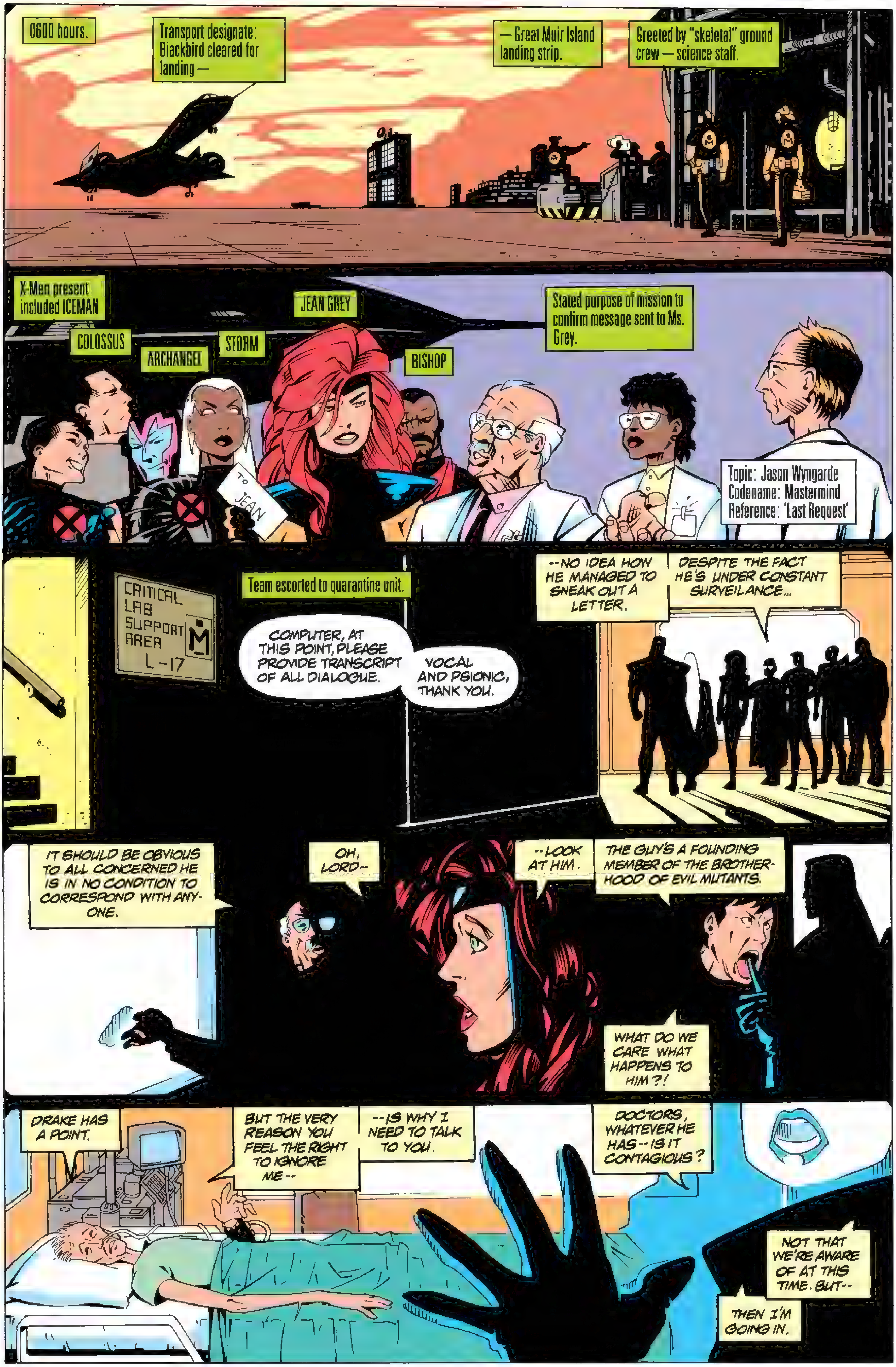

I REFUSE TO *STAND HERE* AND ALLOW YOU TO MAKE A *MOCKERY* OF EVERYTHING I'VE EVER RESPECTED IN THE *X-MEN!*
X-MEN!
SIGN ME!
LOOKITSTHEM!
ICEMASTER RULES!
SIGN MY BOOK!
I *LUV* YOUSE GUYS.
YOU'RE STILL THINKING *SUBSTANCE* OVER *STYLE*, B.
THE X-MEN OF THE *NINETIES* ARE ABOUT GIVING THE PEOPLE WHAT THEY WANT.
AND *WHAT* THEY WANT... IS *ME*.
I MEAN, WHAT'S THE *BIG DEAL* HERE?
HUMANS DON'T TREAT MUTANTS LIKE PEOPLE *ANYWAY...*
...SO WHAT'S *WRONG* WITH BEING TREATED LIKE A *STAR* INSTEAD?
NOW WHY DON'T YA' *GO* FIND YER *OWN* FANTASY, BUB...
...BEFORE I SHOW YA' WHAT *YER* MADE OF.
ANY TIME *SHOWBOAT.*
WHENEVER YA' GOT *FIVE FREE* MINUTES TO *SPARE...*
IT'S A SMALL *PLAYGROUND*, CHILDREN. LET'S *TRY* TO *GET ALONG*.
WE'RE *BAMFED*, BISHOP.
BUT--
NOW, BISHOP

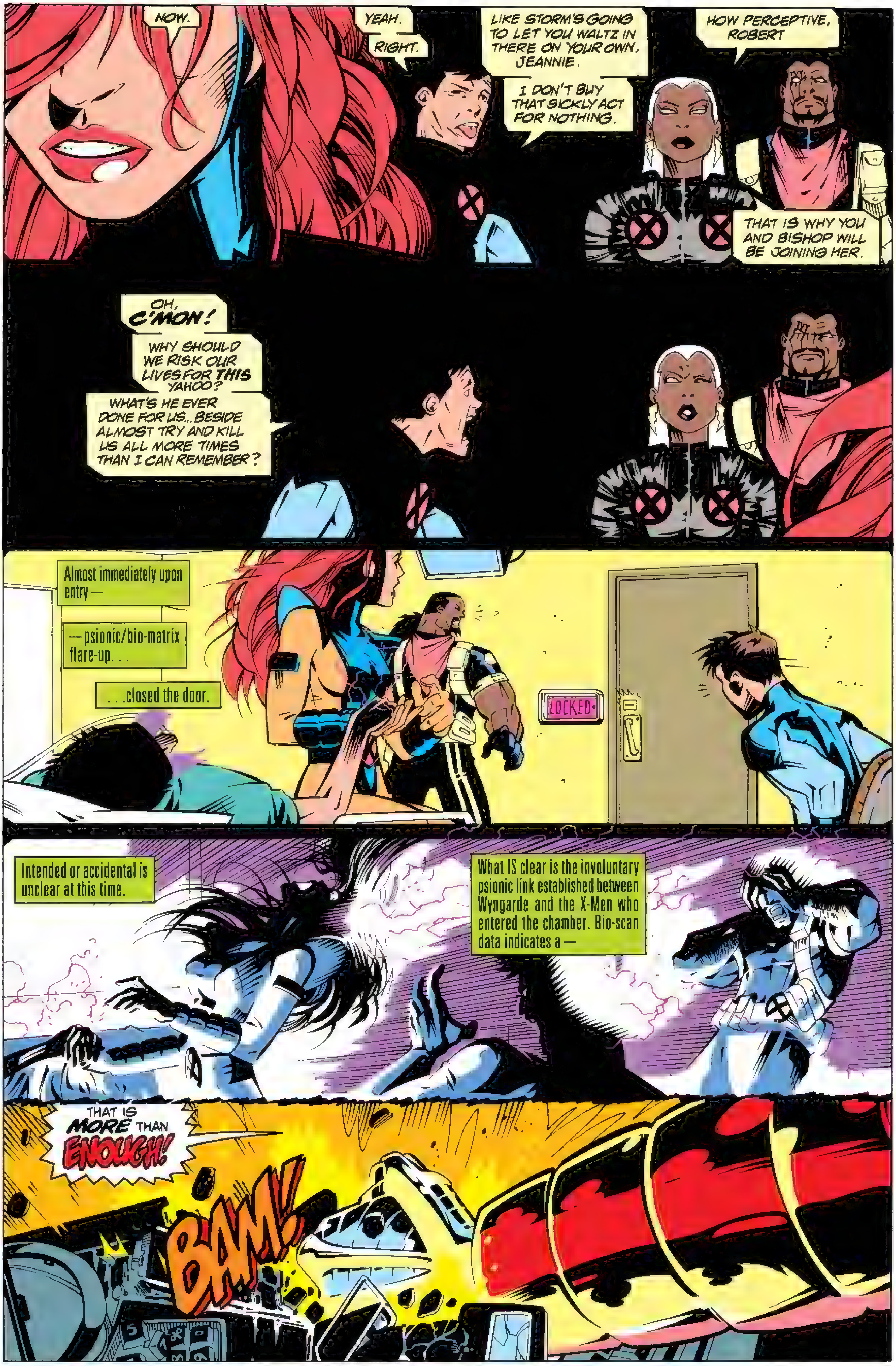

THANK YOU AGAIN, SISTER.
AS **ALWAYS**, YOU ARE THE VOICE OF REASON THAT HELPS ME KEEP THINGS IN PERSPECTIVE.
A **FULL TIME** JOB, BISHOP.
MORE THAN **HALF** THE REASON I **OUTRANK** YOU IN THE X.S.E.
I DON'T KNOW WHERE I WOULD...
...BE...
...WITHOUT... YOU.
'D BE
LOST
LOST IN TIME?
PAST
ALONE?
WITHOUT YOU.
WHY.. DOES THIS SEEM SO... WRONG?
A **DARK** FANTASY.
NOTHING **UNREAL** ABOUT IT.
SO LONG AS YOU **NEED** ME--
--**BELIEVE** IN ME--
--I AM **HERE** FOR YOU, BROTHER.
I AM **HERE** FOR YOU.
SO WHAT'S **WRONG** WITH LIVING A **FANTASY**, JEANNIE?
I ALWAYS FELT I **SHOULD** BE IN CHARGE, AND **NOW** I AM.
I'M JUST BRINGING MY **ACCOUNTING EXPERIENCE** INTO SUPER **HEROING**.
THEN I'M **HAPPY** FOR YOU, BOBBY.
REALLY.
YOU COULD BE HAPPY FOR **YOU** TOO, RED...
BOBBY, **PLEASE**-- I'M A **MARRIED** WOMAN.
AND **ECSTATICALLY** MARRIED AT THAT.
YEAH, WELL... AT LEAST I'VE GOT **MYSELF**.
LATER.
SO, **TELL** ME, JEAN--
--IF LIFE IS **SO PERFECT**, WHY DOES EVERYTHING SEEM SO...
...**STRANGE**?

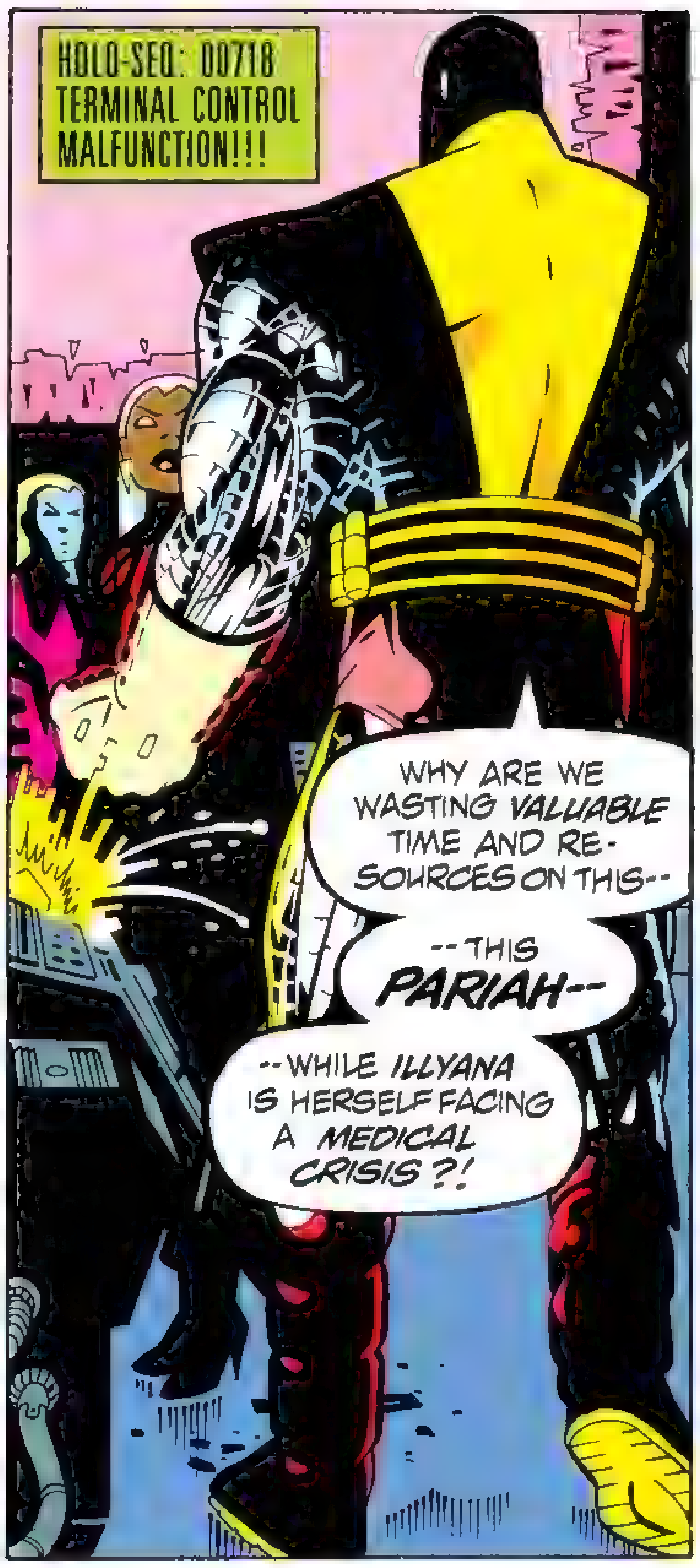

GREAT. AS PER USUAL, WE MISSED OUT ON ALL THE EXCITEMENT.
RACHEL? SCOTT?!
SEE, DAD-- TOLDJA' YOU DIDN'T NEED THAT DOUBLE-DIP BELGIAN CHOCOLATE CHOCOLATE!
SORRY, HONEY... DID I MISS ANYTHING LIFE-THREATENING?
CAN I TELL 'IM, MA? CAN I?
OH, SCOTT-- I'M SO HAPPY TO SEE YOU!
IT'S BEEN A WHOLE HALF-HOUR.
IMAGINE MY CONCERN.
IT'S JUST, SOMETIMES I CAN'T BELIEVE WE'RE MARRIED.
HAPPILY, TO BOOT.
I'M SPEAKING FOR MYSELF, OF COURSE.
HOW COULD I HELP BUT BE HAPPY...
... AN UPSTANDING HUSBAND--
-- TWO BEAUTIFUL CHILDREN?
... FOUR TICKETS TO THE NEW X-MEN MOVIE!
WHAT TICKETS?
PLEASE SAY YES, MOM-- PLEASE!
ILLYANA AND DOUG AND DANI AND EVERYONE IS GOING!
WELLLLL-- IF EVERYONE IS GOING...
YAY!
YIPPEE!
♫ WE'RE GOING TO THE MOVIES ♪
♪ 'CAUSE WE HAVE THE BEST MOMMY! ♫
♩ GOING TO THE MOVIES ♬

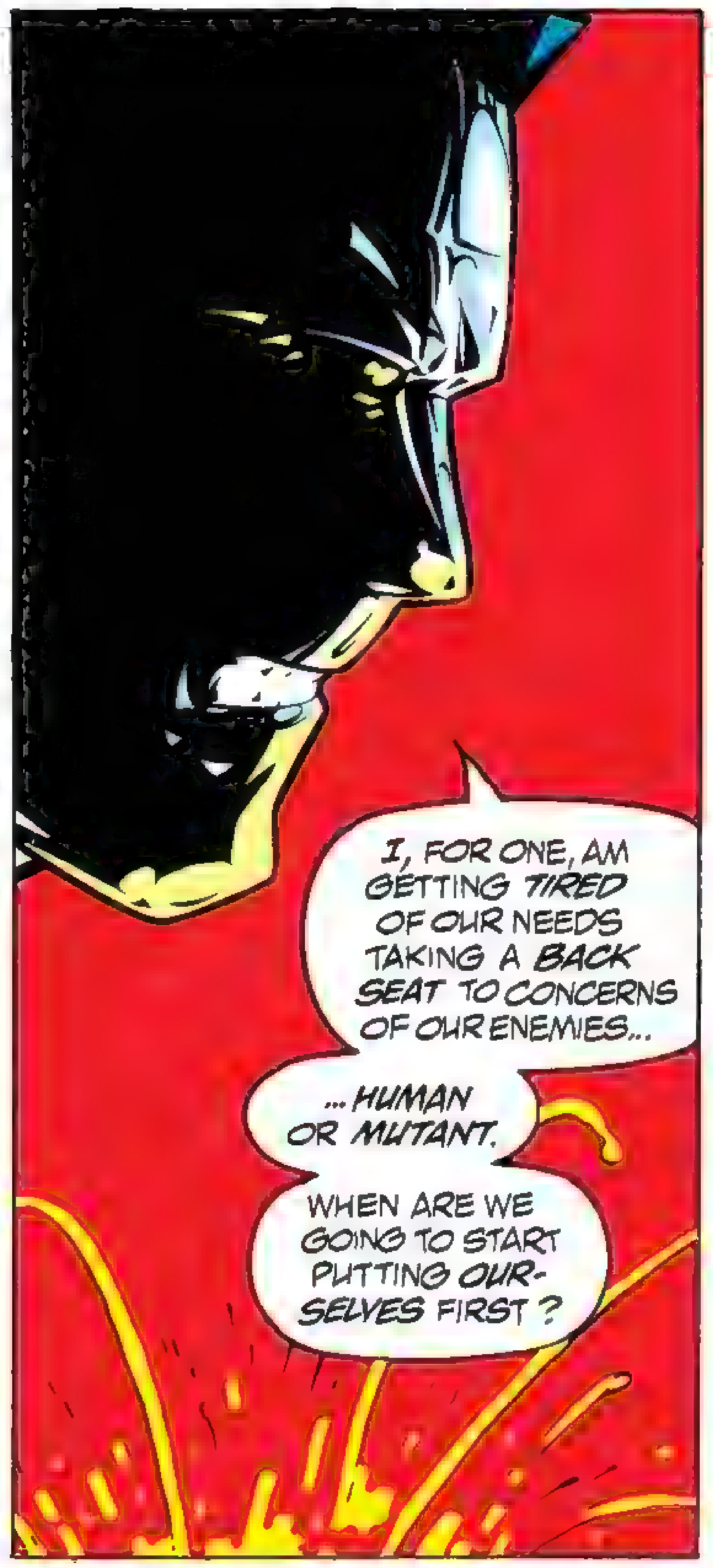

BEEP
BEEP
BEEP
BEEP
BEEP
BEEP
BEEP
BEEP
BEEP
"THE GUY'S IN A COMA--
WHAT POSSIBLE THREAT
CAN HE POSE TO THREE
X-MEN ?!"
TO
JEAN

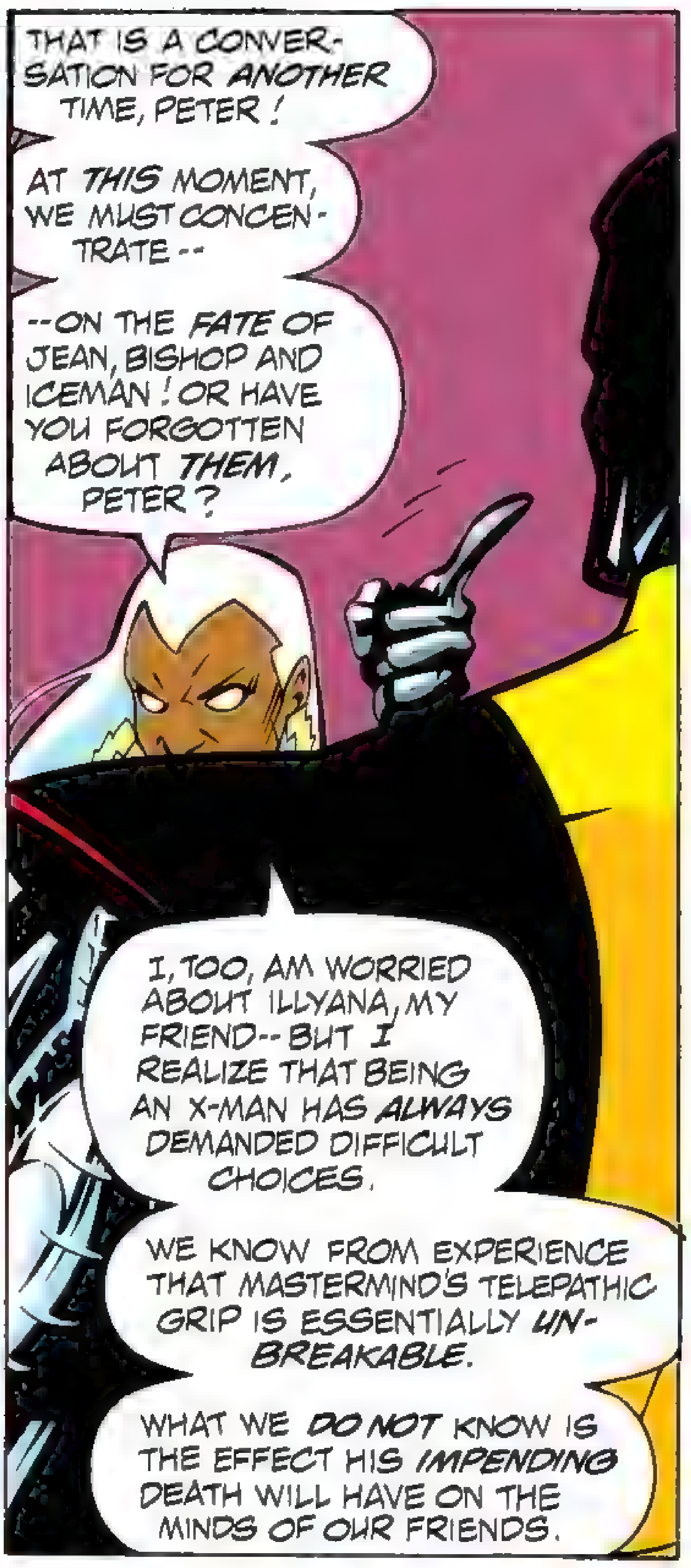

WARREN, CONSIDERING JASON WYNGARDE'S POWER IS *PSIONIC* IN NATURE--
--AND WE MUST EXPLORE THE HYPOTHESIS THAT HIS *CATATONIC* STATE DOES NOT *HAMPER* HIS MUTANT ABILITY...
YOU'RE SAYING HE CAN MENTALLY *CONTROL* THEM *DESPITE* HIS CONDITION ?!
PERFECT.
BACK HOME, MY SISTER IS SICK--AND *NOT* GETTING ANY BETTER--AND WE ARE *STUCK* IN SCOTLAND BATTLING A *CORPSE* ?
PETER HAS A POINT, *ORORO*--CAN'T WE JUST...
... I DON'T KNOW...
... *WAKE THEM UP* ?!
SOMETHING ?
ANYTHING.
GREAT.
ORORO, ARE YOU IGNORING ME OR DOES MASTERMIND HAVE *YOU* TOO?!
MY APOLOGIES, WARREN--BUT I HAD MORE IMPORTANT THINGS TO ATTEND TO THAN LISTEN TO YOUR PRATTLING.
I KNEW THAT.
FINALLY...
... THIS MEAN WE'RE *GOING* IN ?
NOT AT ALL.
I WILL *NOT* PROVIDE MASTERMIND WITH MORE FODDER--
--UNTIL I AM *SURE* OF WHAT WE ARE UP AGAINST.
COMPUTER?
Muir Isle Computer — Greetings.
PLEASE DON'T RUN THE HOLO-PROGRAM AGAIN. *PLEASE*.
I'LL *SCREAM* IF WE DON'T DO SOMETHING SOON.
IF YOU *FEEL* IT WILL *HELP*, WARREN. I, FOR ONE, SHALL NOT STOP YOU.
RUN *SURVEILANCE* TAPE... FOCUSING ON SUBJECT: JEAN GREY.
PLEASE *BEGIN*.
Running.

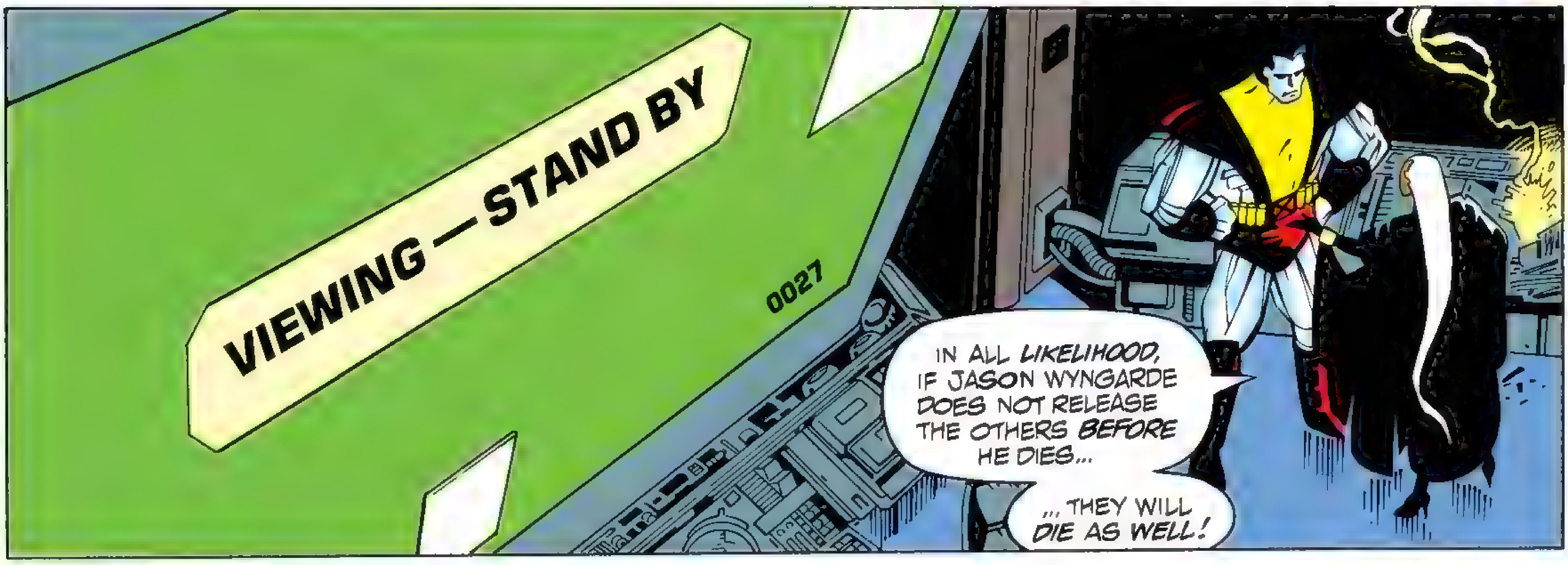

0600 hours.
Transport designate: Blackbird cleared for landing —
— Great Muir Island landing strip.
Greeted by "skeletal" ground crew — science staff.
X-Men present included ICEMAN
COLOSSUS
ARCHANGEL
STORM
JEAN GREY
BISHOP
Stated purpose of mission to confirm message sent to Ms. Grey.
TO JEAN
Topic: Jason Wyngarde Codename: Mastermind Reference: 'Last Request'
CRITICAL LAB SUPPORT AREA L-17
M
Team escorted to quarantine unit.
COMPUTER, AT THIS POINT, PLEASE PROVIDE TRANSCRIPT OF ALL DIALOGUE.
VOCAL AND PSIONIC, THANK YOU.
--NO IDEA HOW HE MANAGED TO SNEAK OUT A LETTER.
DESPITE THE FACT HE'S UNDER CONSTANT SURVEILANCE...
IT SHOULD BE OBVIOUS TO ALL CONCERNED HE IS IN NO CONDITION TO CORRESPOND WITH ANYONE.
OH, LORD--
--LOOK AT HIM.
THE GUY'S A FOUNDING MEMBER OF THE BROTHERHOOD OF EVIL MUTANTS.
WHAT DO WE CARE WHAT HAPPENS TO HIM?!
DRAKE HAS A POINT.
BUT THE VERY REASON YOU FEEL THE RIGHT TO IGNORE ME--
--IS WHY I NEED TO TALK TO YOU.
DOCTORS, WHATEVER HE HAS--IS IT CONTAGIOUS?
NOT THAT WE'RE AWARE OF AT THIS TIME. BUT--
THEN I'M GOING IN.

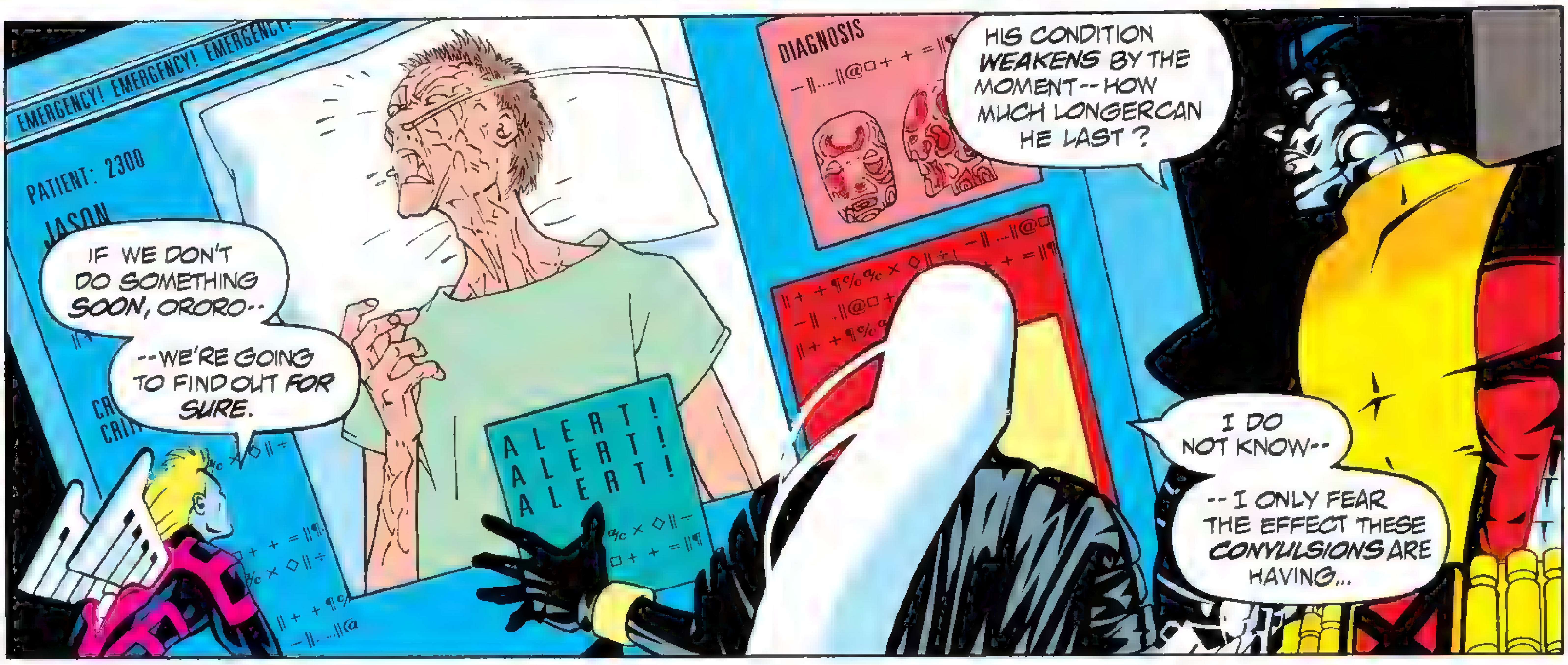

NOW.
YEAH.
RIGHT.
LIKE STORM'S GOING TO LET YOU WALTZ IN THERE ON YOUR OWN, JEANNIE.
I DON'T BUY THAT SICKLY ACT FOR NOTHING.
HOW PERCEPTIVE, ROBERT
THAT IS WHY YOU AND BISHOP WILL BE JOINING HER.
OH, C'MON!
WHY SHOULD WE RISK OUR LIVES FOR THIS YAHOO?
WHAT'S HE EVER DONE FOR US... BESIDE ALMOST TRY AND KILL US ALL MORE TIMES THAN I CAN REMEMBER?
Almost immediately upon entry —
— psionic/bio-matrix flare-up. . .
. . .closed the door.
LOCKED
Intended or accidental is unclear at this time.
What IS clear is the involuntary psionic link established between Wyngarde and the X-Men who entered the chamber. Bio-scan data indicates a —
THAT IS MORE THAN ENOUGH!
BAM!

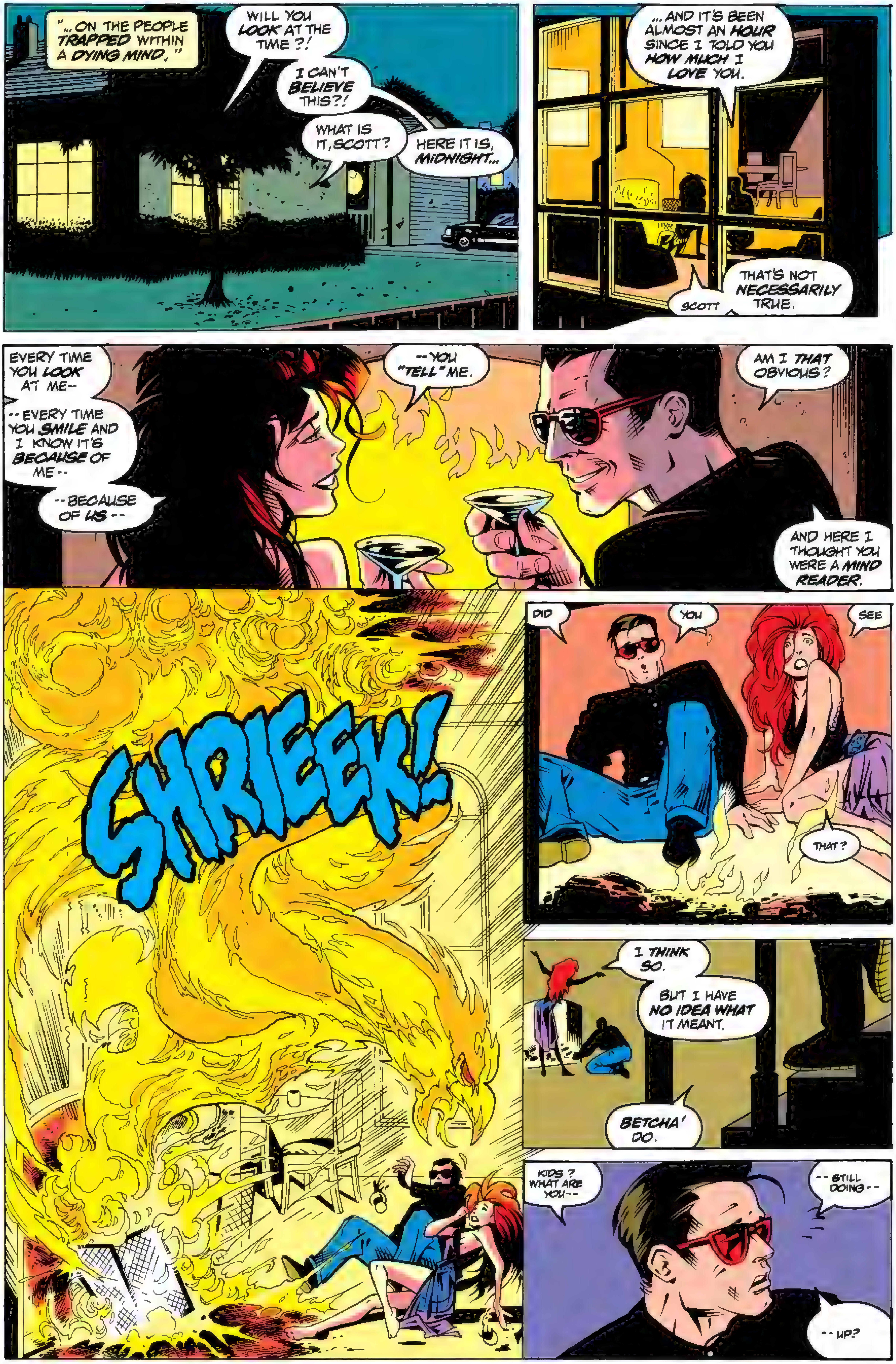

HOLO-SEQ: 00718 TERMINAL CONTROL MALFUNCTION!!!
WHY ARE WE WASTING *VALUABLE* TIME AND RESOURCES ON THIS--
--THIS *PARIAH*--
--WHILE *ILLYANA* IS HERSELF FACING A *MEDICAL CRISIS*?!


I, FOR ONE, AM GETTING *TIRED* OF OUR NEEDS TAKING A *BACK SEAT* TO CONCERNS OF OUR ENEMIES...
...*HUMAN OR MUTANT.*
WHEN ARE WE GOING TO START PUTTING *OURSELVES* FIRST?

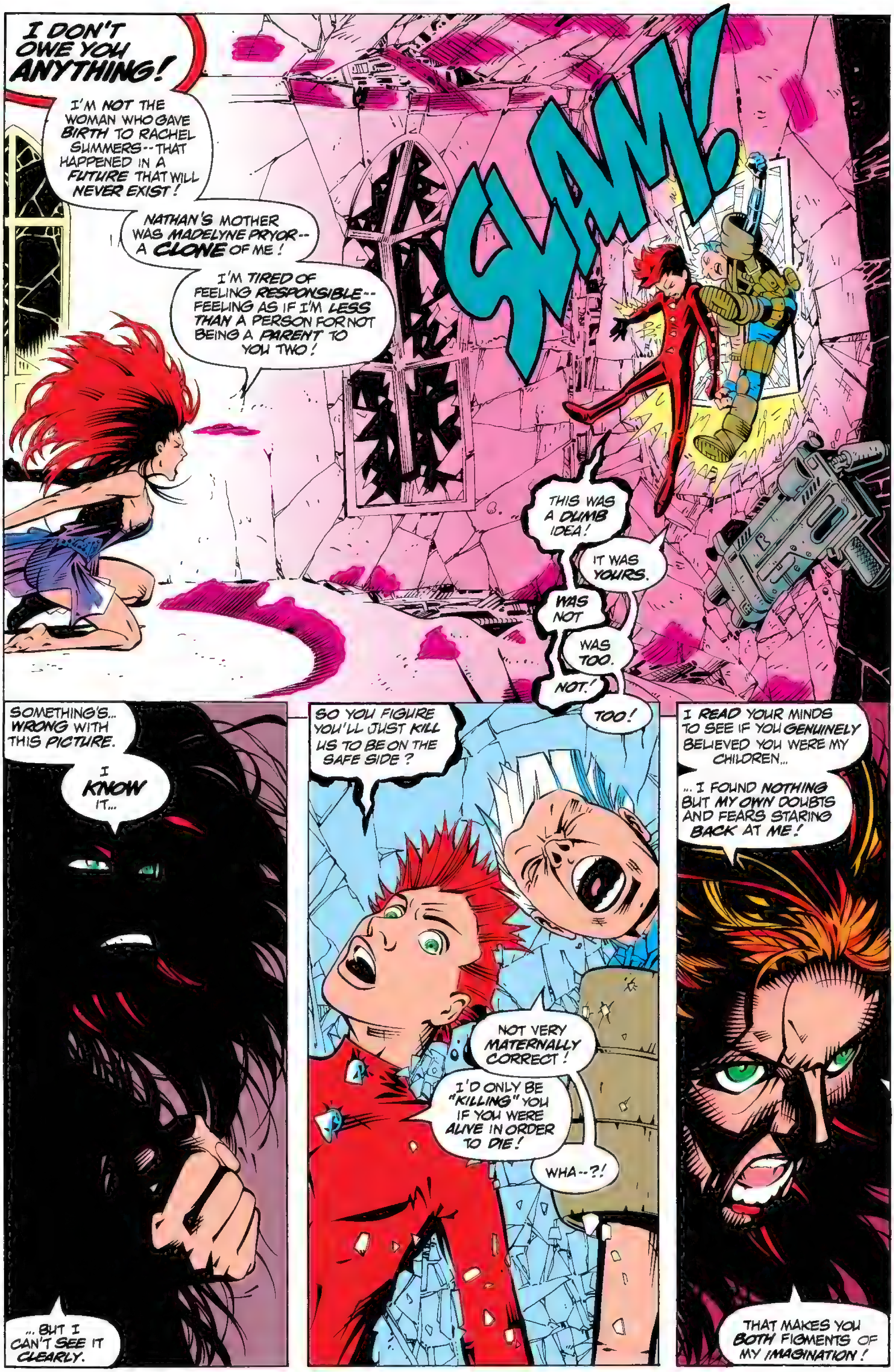

THAT IS A CONVERSATION FOR *ANOTHER* TIME, PETER!
AT *THIS* MOMENT, WE MUST CONCENTRATE--
--ON THE *FATE* OF JEAN, BISHOP AND ICEMAN! OR HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN ABOUT *THEM*, PETER?
I, TOO, AM WORRIED ABOUT ILLYANA, MY FRIEND--BUT *I* REALIZE THAT BEING AN X-MAN HAS *ALWAYS* DEMANDED DIFFICULT CHOICES.
WE KNOW FROM EXPERIENCE THAT MASTERMIND'S TELEPATHIC GRIP IS ESSENTIALLY *UNBREAKABLE*.
WHAT WE *DO NOT* KNOW IS THE EFFECT HIS *IMPENDING* DEATH WILL HAVE ON THE MINDS OF OUR FRIENDS.

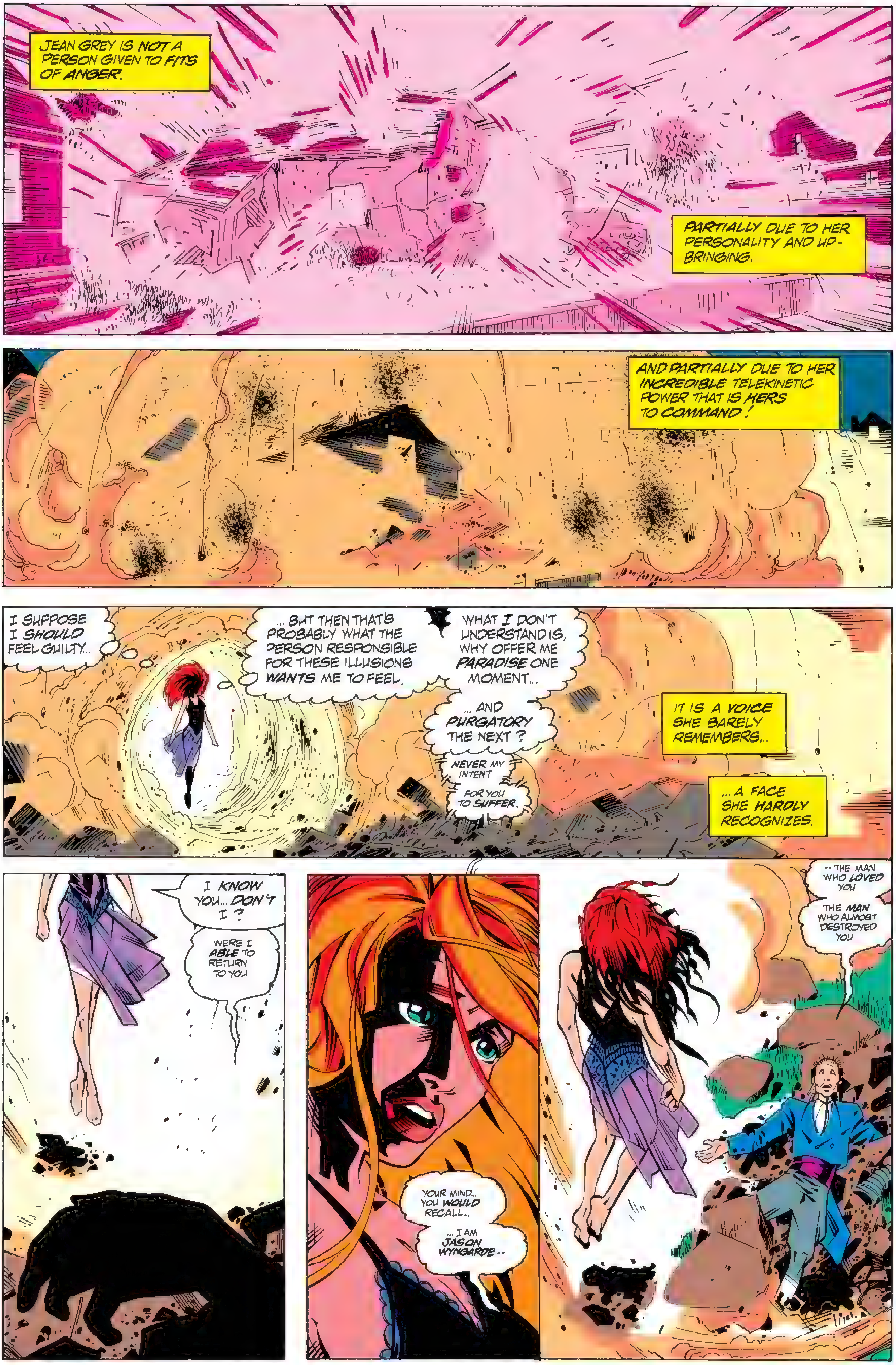

VIEWING — STAND BY
0027
IN ALL *LIKELIHOOD*, IF JASON WYNGARDE DOES NOT RELEASE THE OTHERS *BEFORE* HE DIES...
...THEY WILL *DIE AS WELL!*

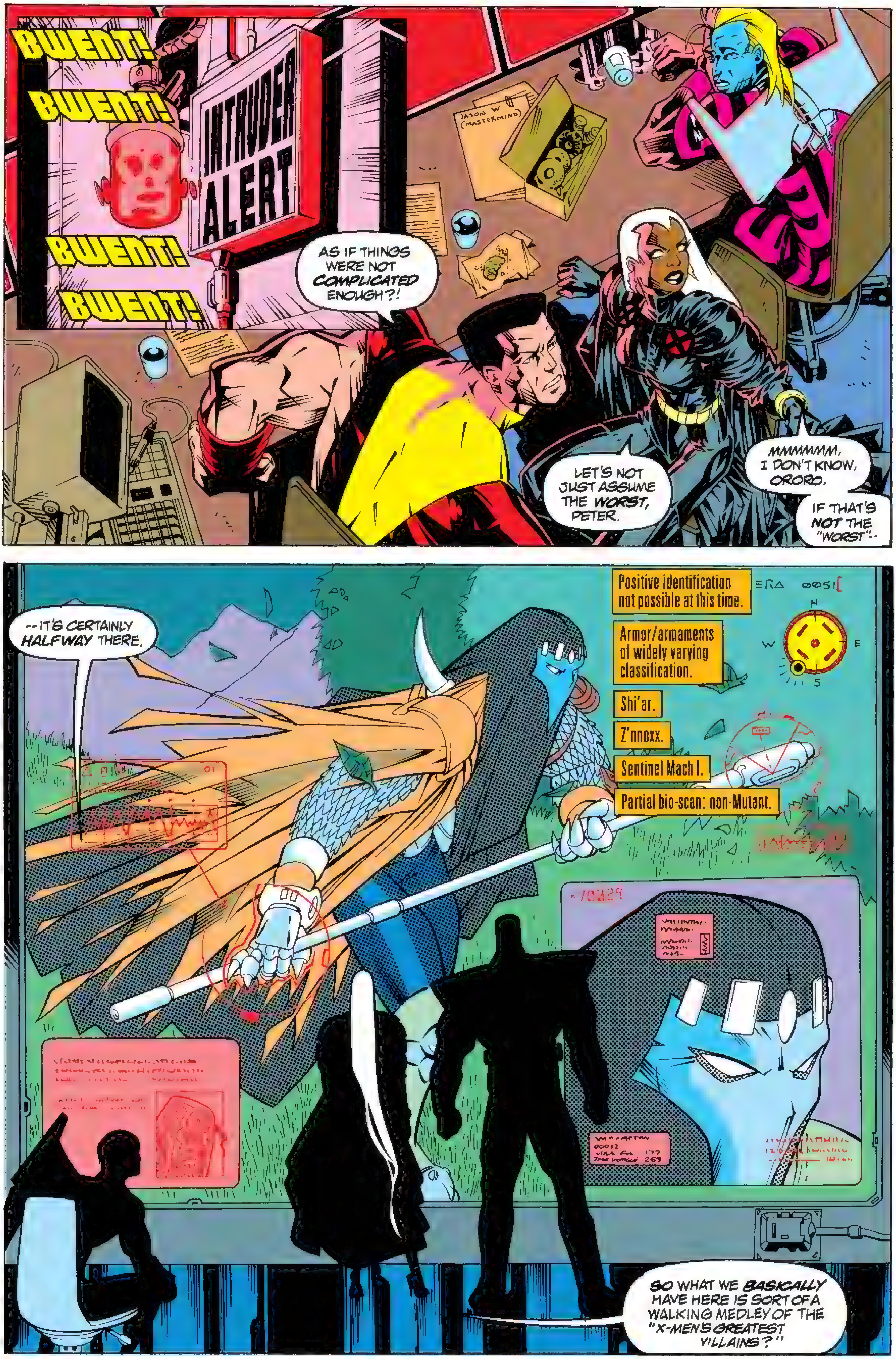

EMERGENCY! EMERGENCY! EMERGENCY!
PATIENT: 2300
JASON
DIAGNOSIS
ALERT!
ALERT!
ALERT!
HIS CONDITION *WEAKENS* BY THE MOMENT--HOW MUCH LONGER CAN HE LAST?
IF WE DON'T DO SOMETHING *SOON, ORORO*--
--WE'RE GOING TO FIND OUT *FOR SURE*.
I DO NOT KNOW--
--I ONLY FEAR THE EFFECT THESE *CONVULSIONS* ARE HAVING...

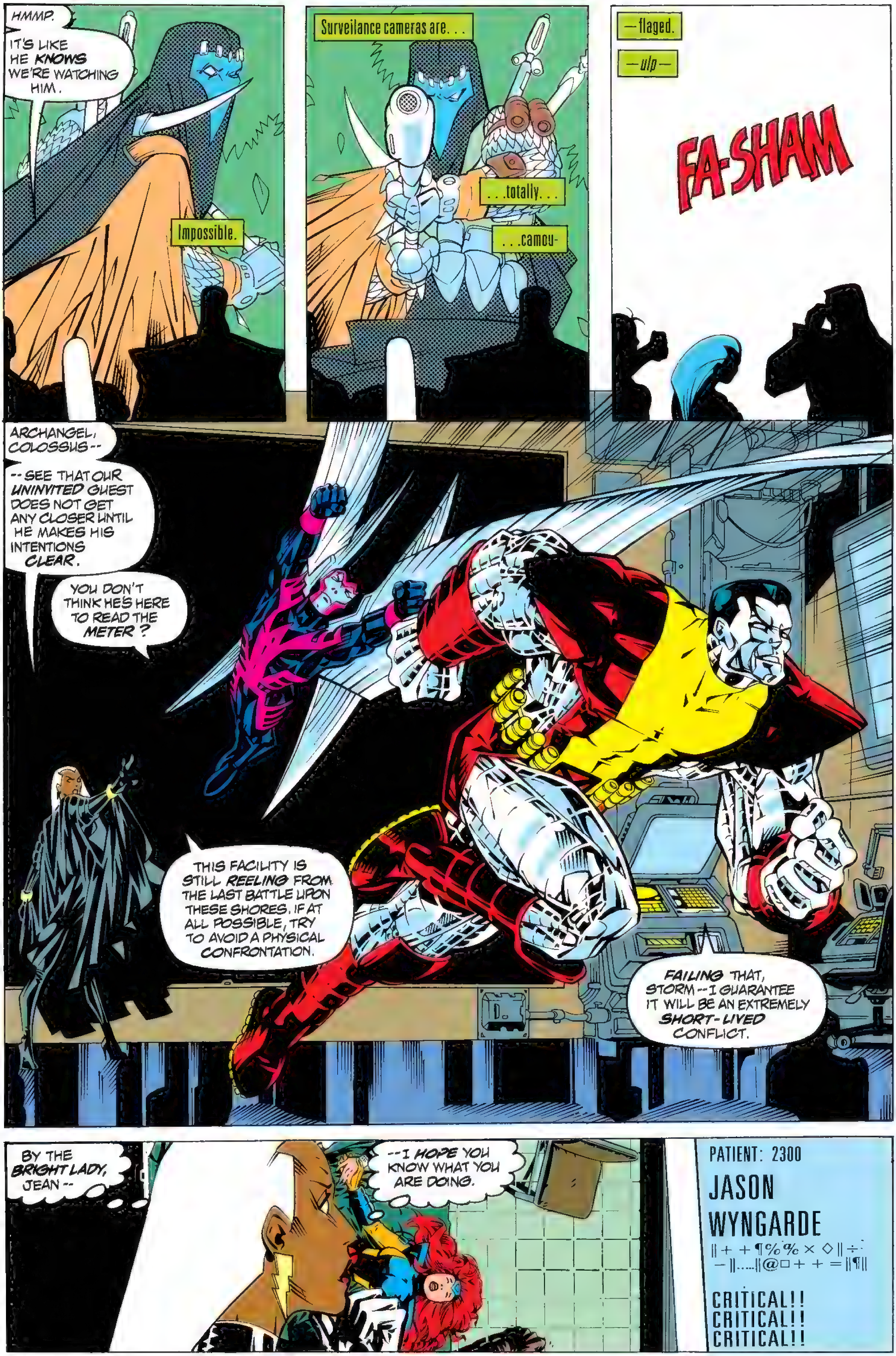

"...ON THE PEOPLE TRAPPED WITHIN A DYING MIND."
WILL YOU LOOK AT THE TIME?!
I CAN'T BELIEVE THIS?!
WHAT IS IT, SCOTT?
HERE IT IS, MIDNIGHT...
...AND IT'S BEEN ALMOST AN HOUR SINCE I TOLD YOU HOW MUCH I LOVE YOU.
SCOTT
THAT'S NOT NECESSARILY TRUE.
EVERY TIME YOU LOOK AT ME--
--EVERY TIME YOU SMILE AND I KNOW IT'S BECAUSE OF ME--
--BECAUSE OF US--
--YOU "TELL" ME.
AM I THAT OBVIOUS?
AND HERE I THOUGHT YOU WERE A MIND READER.
SHRIEEK!
DID
YOU
SEE
THAT?
I THINK SO.
BUT I HAVE NO IDEA WHAT IT MEANT.
BETCHA' DO.
KIDS? WHAT ARE YOU--
--STILL DOING--
--UP?

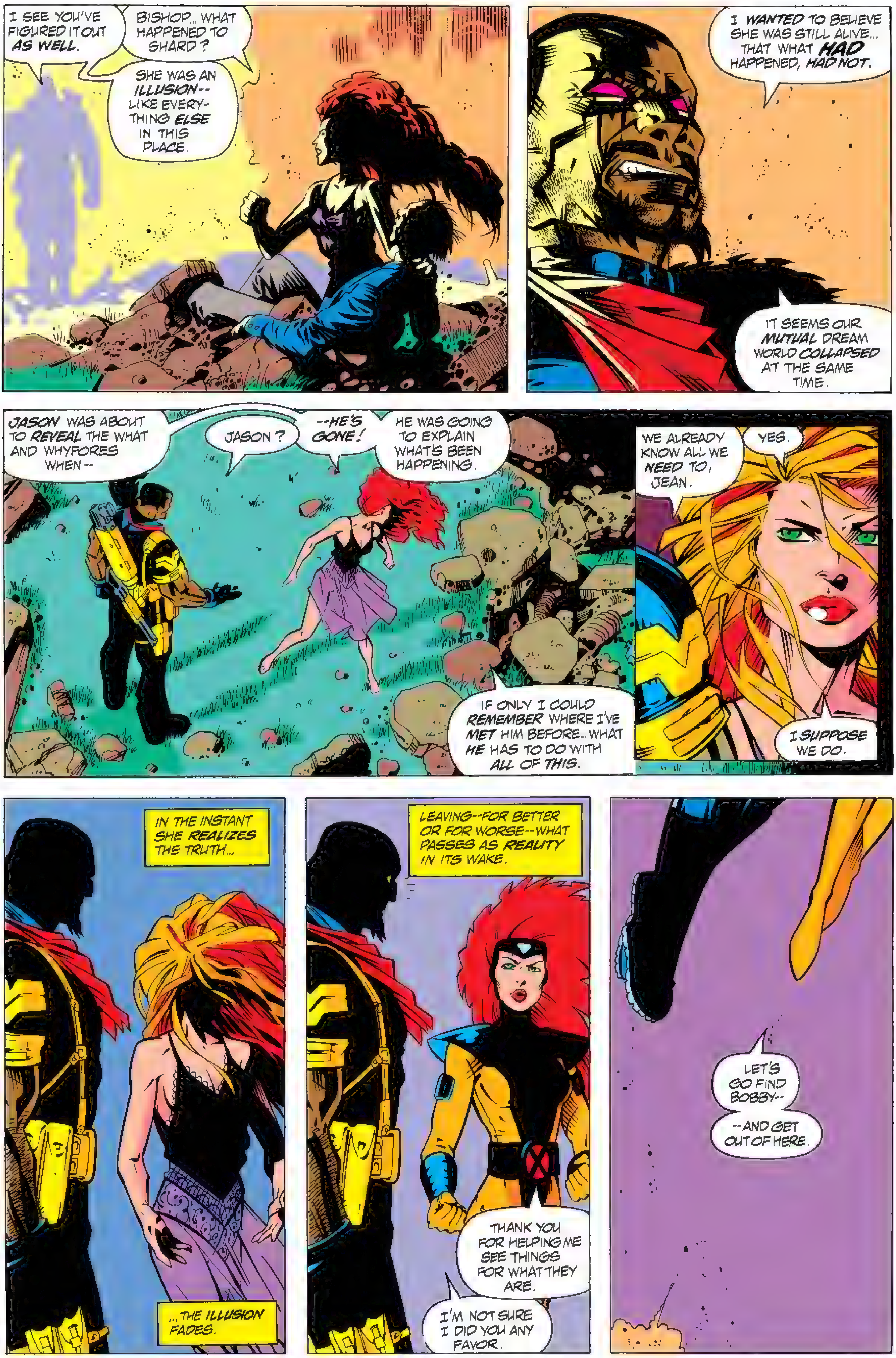
WE WERE TALKING, NATE AND I--
--ABOUT HOW THE TWO OF YOU HAVE BEEN TOTAL ZIPS ON THE PARENTAL FRONT.
YOU COULDN'T CARE LESS IF I LIVE IN ENGLAND OR IF I'M OUT IN SPACE--
--AND ME? FIRST TIME I GET SICK, YOU GROUND ME IN THE FUTURE.
NOBODY'S PERFECT.
IS THERE ANYTHING WE CAN DO TO MAKE AMENDS FOR ALL THIS?
NOT EVEN ANYTHING! YOU TOTALLY TRASHED OUR LIVES...
...SO WE'VE DECIDED TO RETURN THE FAVOR
AND THEN SOME.
MAYBE IN YOUR NEXT LIFE--
--YOU'LL BE A LITTLE MORE CONSIDERATE.
DOUBT IT!
JEAN!
FWAHOOOSH!
SCOTT...?!
ONE DOWN.
ONE TO GO!
WHY...?
AWWWW. DID WE SPOIL YOUR PERFECT WITTLE WORLD.
SORRY.

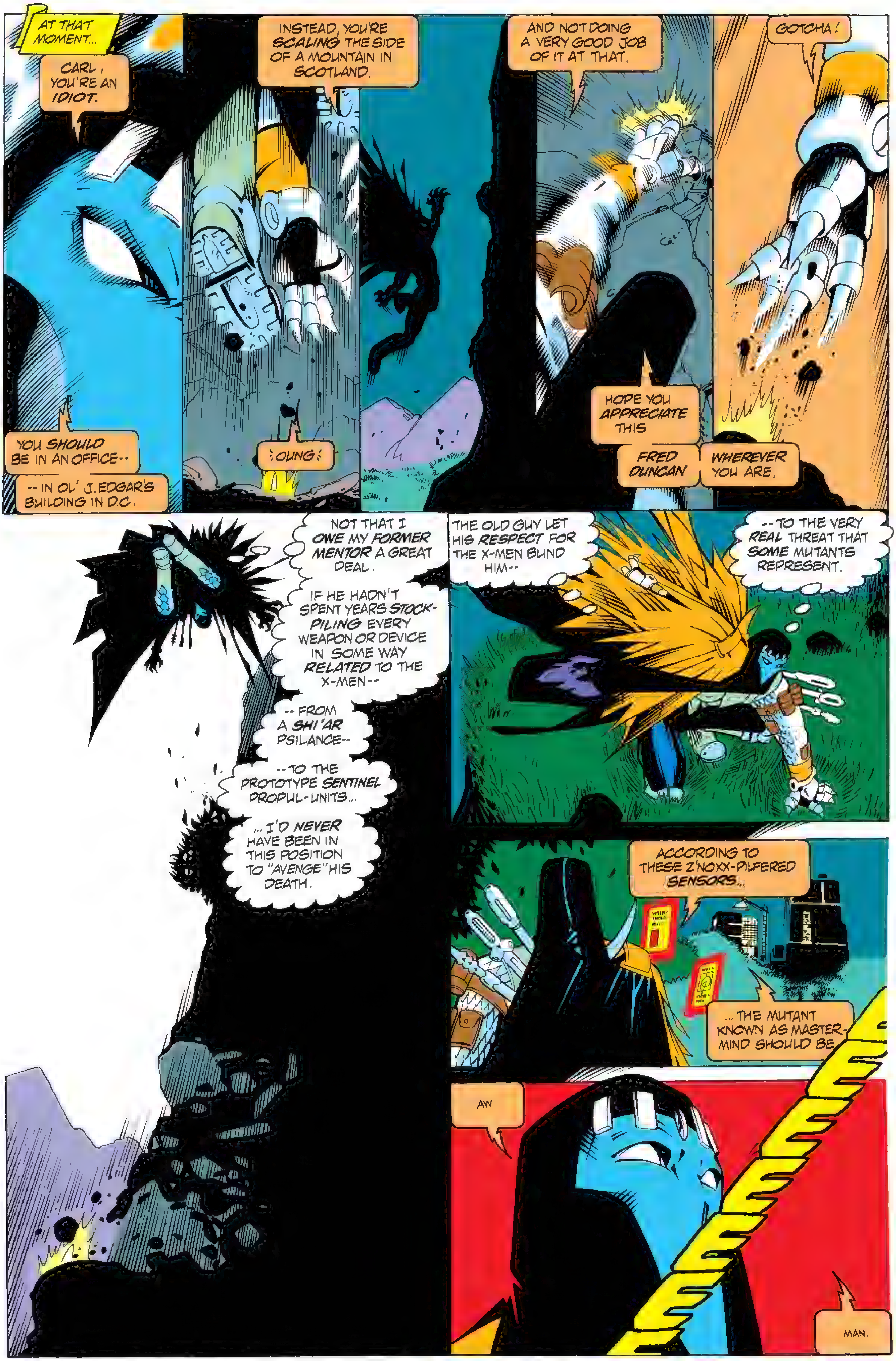

I DON'T OWE YOU ANYTHING!
I'M NOT THE WOMAN WHO GAVE BIRTH TO RACHEL SUMMERS--THAT HAPPENED IN A FUTURE THAT WILL NEVER EXIST!
NATHAN'S MOTHER WAS MADELYNE PRYOR--A CLONE OF ME!
I'M TIRED OF FEELING RESPONSIBLE--FEELING AS IF I'M LESS THAN A PERSON FOR NOT BEING A PARENT TO YOU TWO!
SLAM!
THIS WAS A DUMB IDEA!
IT WAS YOURS.
WAS NOT
WAS TOO.
NOT!
TOO!
SOMETHING'S... WRONG WITH THIS PICTURE.
I KNOW IT...
...BUT I CAN'T SEE IT CLEARLY.
SO YOU FIGURE YOU'LL JUST KILL US TO BE ON THE SAFE SIDE?
NOT VERY MATERNALLY CORRECT!
I'D ONLY BE "KILLING" YOU IF YOU WERE ALIVE IN ORDER TO DIE!
WHA--?!
I READ YOUR MINDS TO SEE IF YOU GENUINELY BELIEVED YOU WERE MY CHILDREN...
...I FOUND NOTHING BUT MY OWN DOUBTS AND FEARS STARING BACK AT ME!
THAT MAKES YOU BOTH FIGMENTS OF MY IMAGINATION!

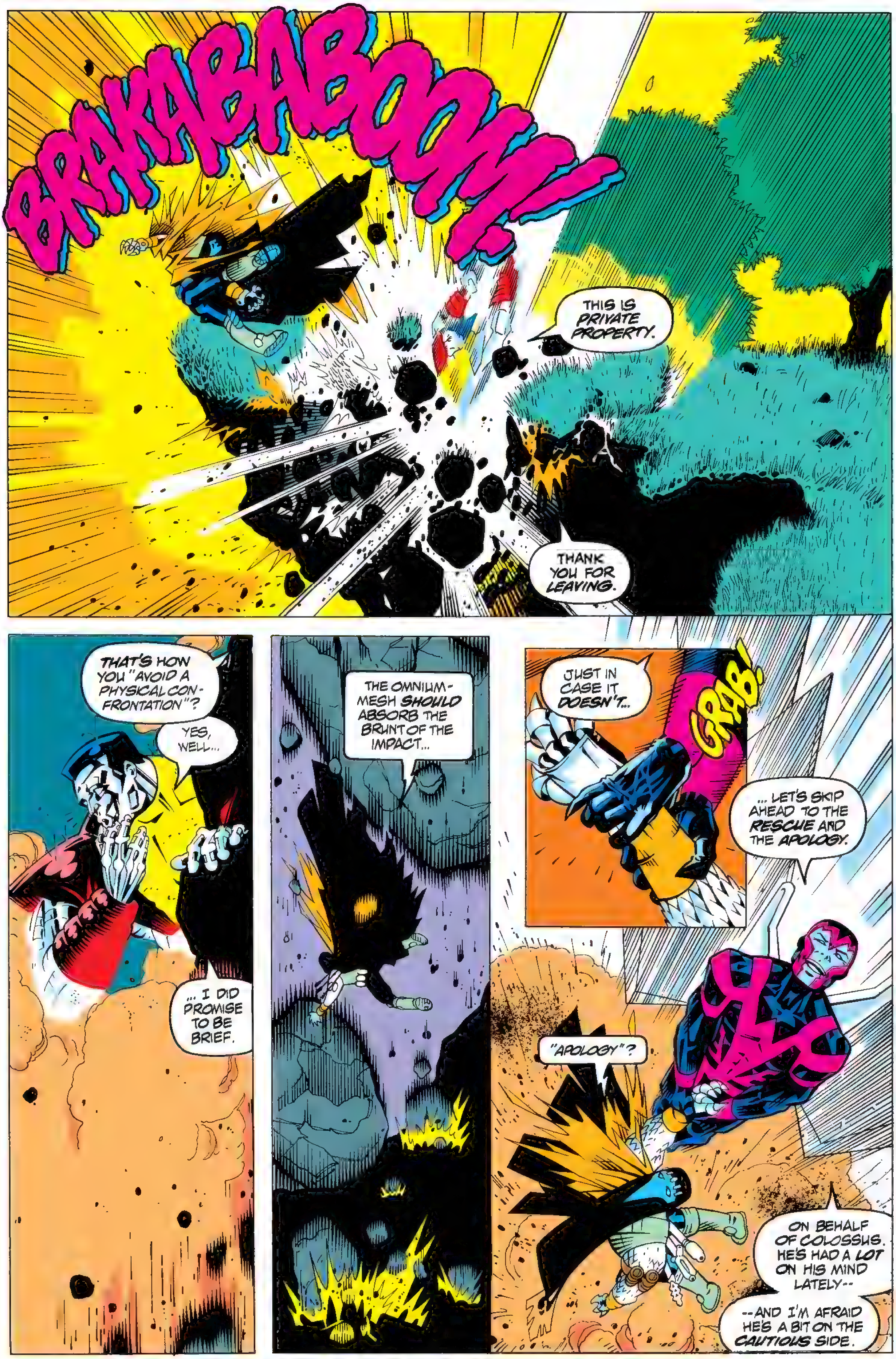

JEAN GREY IS NOT A PERSON GIVEN TO FITS OF ANGER.
PARTIALLY DUE TO HER PERSONALITY AND UPBRINGING.
AND PARTIALLY DUE TO HER INCREDIBLE TELEKINETIC POWER THAT IS HERS TO COMMAND!
I SUPPOSE I SHOULD FEEL GUILTY...
...BUT THEN THAT'S PROBABLY WHAT THE PERSON RESPONSIBLE FOR THESE ILLUSIONS WANTS ME TO FEEL.
WHAT I DON'T UNDERSTAND IS, WHY OFFER ME PARADISE ONE MOMENT...
...AND PURGATORY THE NEXT?
NEVER MY INTENT
FOR YOU TO SUFFER.
IT IS A VOICE SHE BARELY REMEMBERS...
...A FACE SHE HARDLY RECOGNIZES.
I KNOW YOU... DON'T I?
WERE I ABLE TO RETURN TO YOU
YOUR MIND... YOU WOULD RECALL...
...I AM JASON WYNGARDE--
--THE MAN WHO LOVED YOU
THE MAN WHO ALMOST DESTROYED YOU

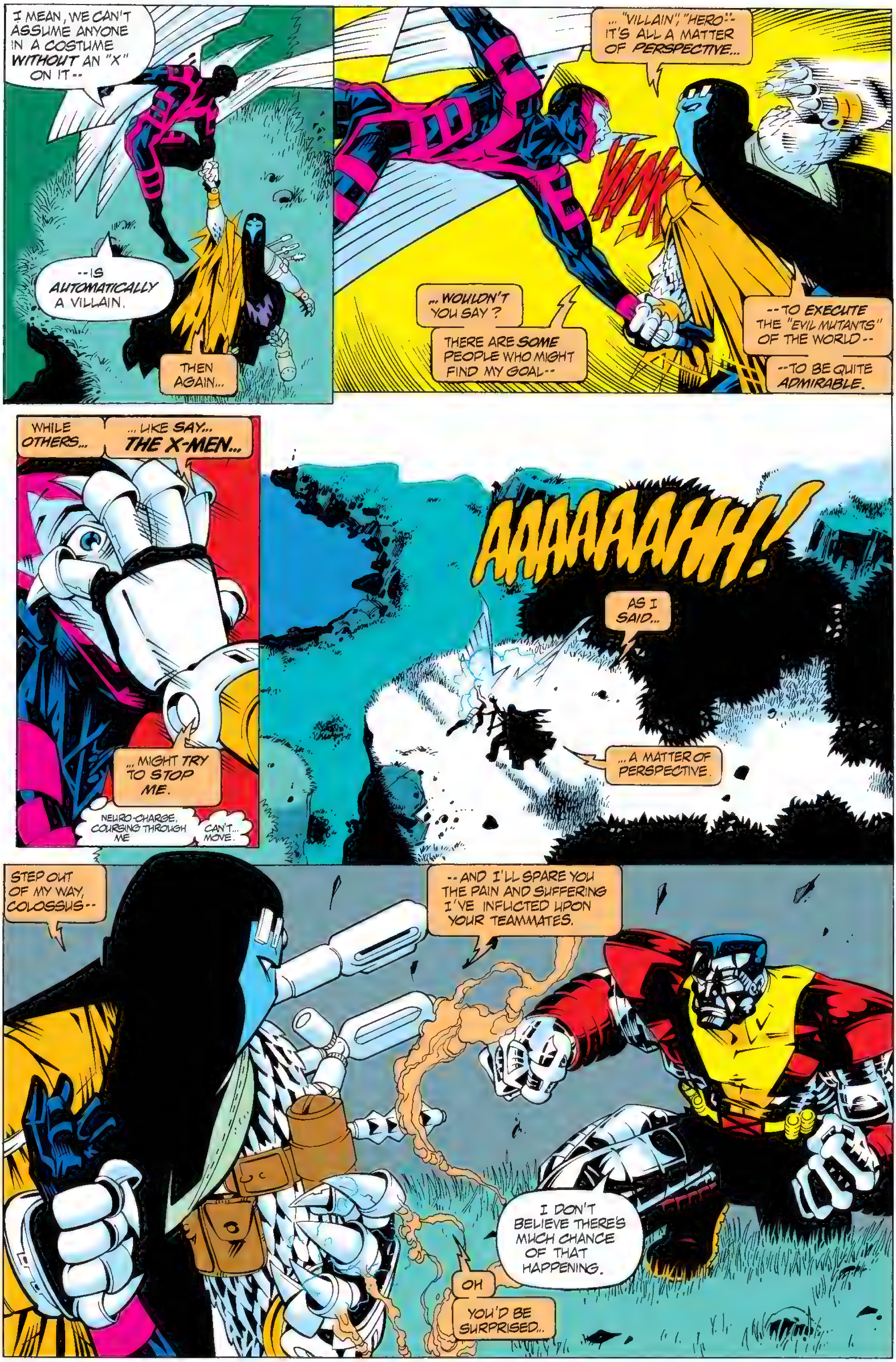

BWENT! BWENT! BWENT! BWENT!
INTRUDER ALERT
JASON W (MASTERMIND)
AS IF THINGS WERE NOT *COMPLICATED* ENOUGH?!
LET'S NOT JUST ASSUME THE *WORST*, PETER.
MMMMMM, I DON'T KNOW, ORORO.
IF THAT'S *NOT* THE "WORST"--
--IT'S CERTAINLY *HALFWAY* THERE.
Positive identification not possible at this time.
Armor/armaments of widely varying classification.
Shi'ar.
Z'nnoxx.
Sentinel Mach I.
Partial bio-scan: non-Mutant.
ERA 0051
N
E
S
W
SO WHAT WE *BASICALLY* HAVE HERE IS SORT OF A WALKING MEDLEY OF THE "X-MEN'S GREATEST VILLAINS?"

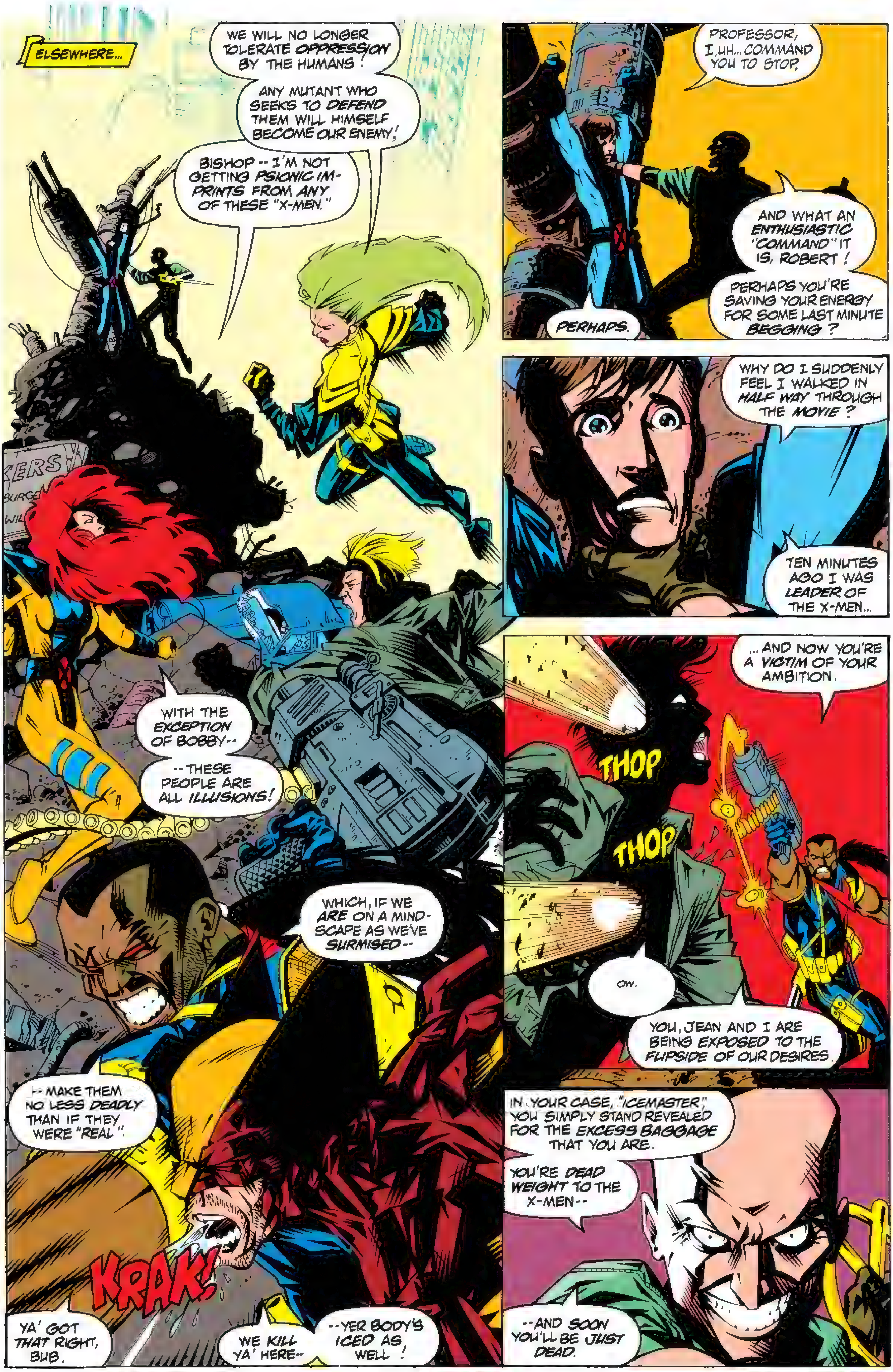

HMMP.
IT'S LIKE HE KNOWS WE'RE WATCHING HIM.
Impossible.
Surveilance cameras are. . .
. . .totally. . .
. . .camou-
—flaged.
—ulp—
FA-SHAM
ARCHANGEL, COLOSSUS--
--SEE THAT OUR UNINVITED GUEST DOES NOT GET ANY CLOSER UNTIL HE MAKES HIS INTENTIONS CLEAR.
YOU DON'T THINK HE'S HERE TO READ THE METER?
THIS FACILITY IS STILL REELING FROM THE LAST BATTLE UPON THESE SHORES. IF AT ALL POSSIBLE, TRY TO AVOID A PHYSICAL CONFRONTATION.
FAILING THAT, STORM--I GUARANTEE IT WILL BE AN EXTREMELY SHORT-LIVED CONFLICT.
BY THE BRIGHT LADY, JEAN--
--I HOPE YOU KNOW WHAT YOU ARE DOING.
PATIENT: 2300
JASON WYNGARDE
||+ +¶%%× ◇||÷·
—||....||@□+ + =||¶||
CRITICAL!!
CRITICAL!!
CRITICAL!!

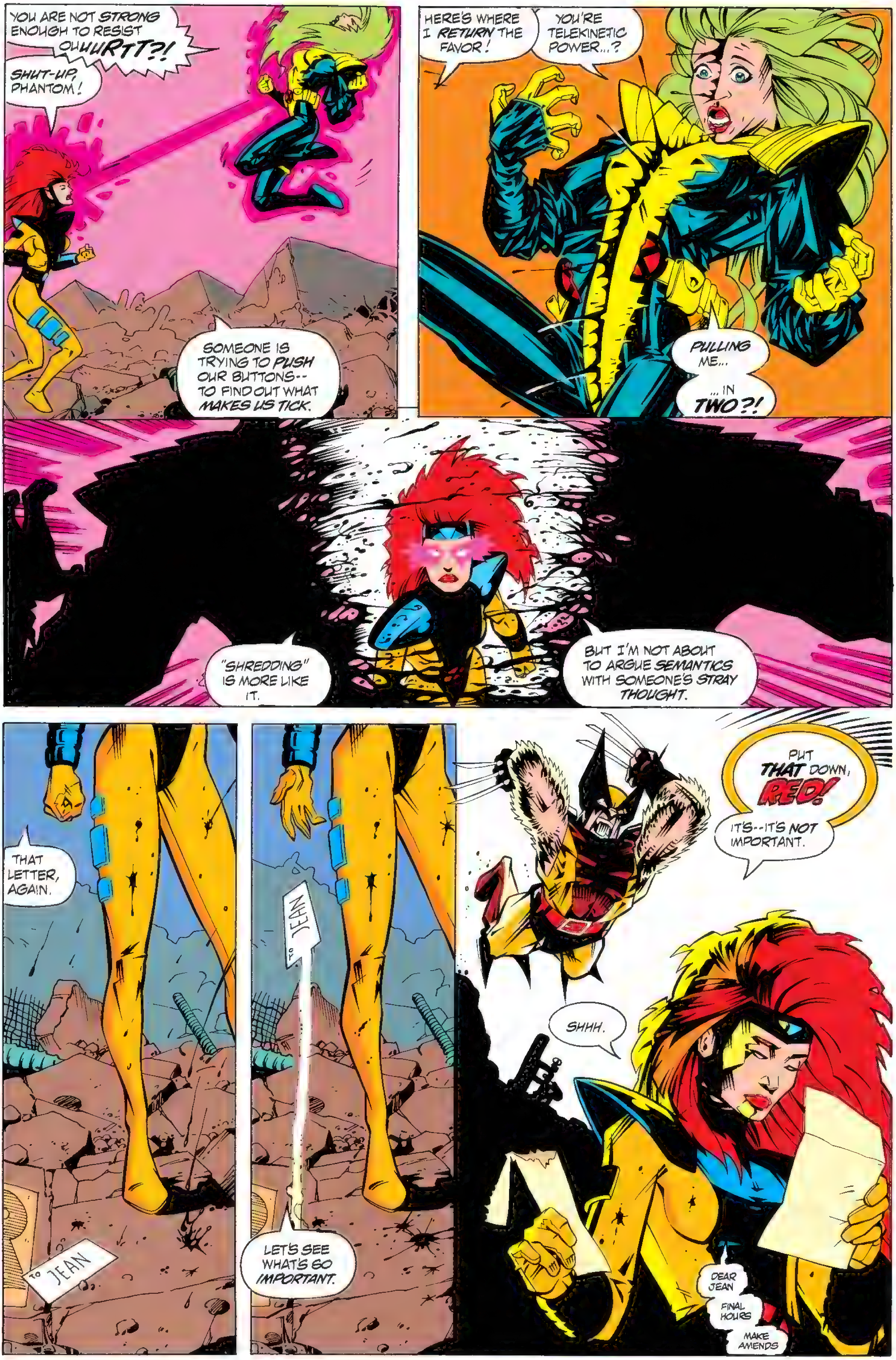

I SEE YOU'VE FIGURED IT OUT AS WELL.
BISHOP... WHAT HAPPENED TO SHARD?
SHE WAS AN ILLUSION-- LIKE EVERYTHING ELSE IN THIS PLACE.
I WANTED TO BELIEVE SHE WAS STILL ALIVE... THAT WHAT HAD HAPPENED, HAD NOT.
IT SEEMS OUR MUTUAL DREAM WORLD COLLAPSED AT THE SAME TIME.
JASON WAS ABOUT TO REVEAL THE WHAT AND WHYFORES WHEN --
JASON?
--HE'S GONE!
HE WAS GOING TO EXPLAIN WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING.
IF ONLY I COULD REMEMBER WHERE I'VE MET HIM BEFORE... WHAT HE HAS TO DO WITH ALL OF THIS.
WE ALREADY KNOW ALL WE NEED TO, JEAN.
YES.
I SUPPOSE WE DO.
IN THE INSTANT SHE REALIZES THE TRUTH...
...THE ILLUSION FADES.
LEAVING--FOR BETTER OR FOR WORSE--WHAT PASSES AS REALITY IN ITS WAKE.
THANK YOU FOR HELPING ME SEE THINGS FOR WHAT THEY ARE.
I'M NOT SURE I DID YOU ANY FAVOR.
LET'S GO FIND BOBBY--
--AND GET OUT OF HERE.

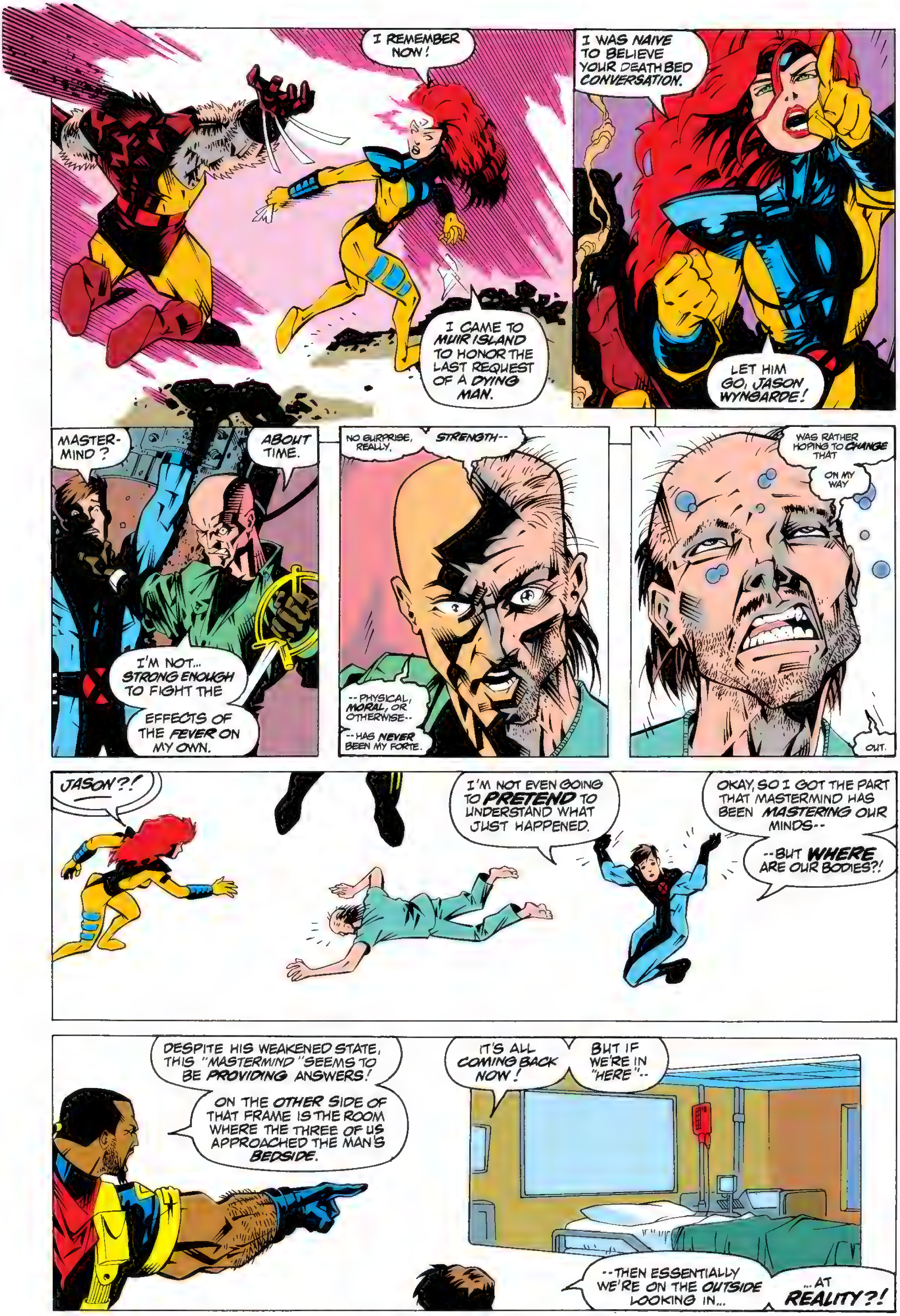

AT THAT MOMENT...
CARL, YOU'RE AN IDIOT.
YOU SHOULD BE IN AN OFFICE--
-- IN OL' J. EDGAR'S BUILDING IN D.C.
INSTEAD, YOU'RE SCALING THE SIDE OF A MOUNTAIN IN SCOTLAND.
OUNG!
AND NOT DOING A VERY GOOD JOB OF IT AT THAT.
HOPE YOU APPRECIATE THIS
FRED DUNCAN
GOTCHA!
WHEREVER YOU ARE.
NOT THAT I OWE MY FORMER MENTOR A GREAT DEAL.
IF HE HADN'T SPENT YEARS STOCKPILING EVERY WEAPON OR DEVICE IN SOME WAY RELATED TO THE X-MEN--
-- FROM A SHI'AR PSILANCE--
-- TO THE PROTOTYPE SENTINEL PROPUL-UNITS...
... I'D NEVER HAVE BEEN IN THIS POSITION TO "AVENGE" HIS DEATH.
THE OLD GUY LET HIS RESPECT FOR THE X-MEN BLIND HIM--
-- TO THE VERY REAL THREAT THAT SOME MUTANTS REPRESENT.
ACCORDING TO THESE Z'NOXX-PILFERED SENSORS...
... THE MUTANT KNOWN AS MASTERMIND SHOULD BE
EEEEEEEE
AW
MAN.

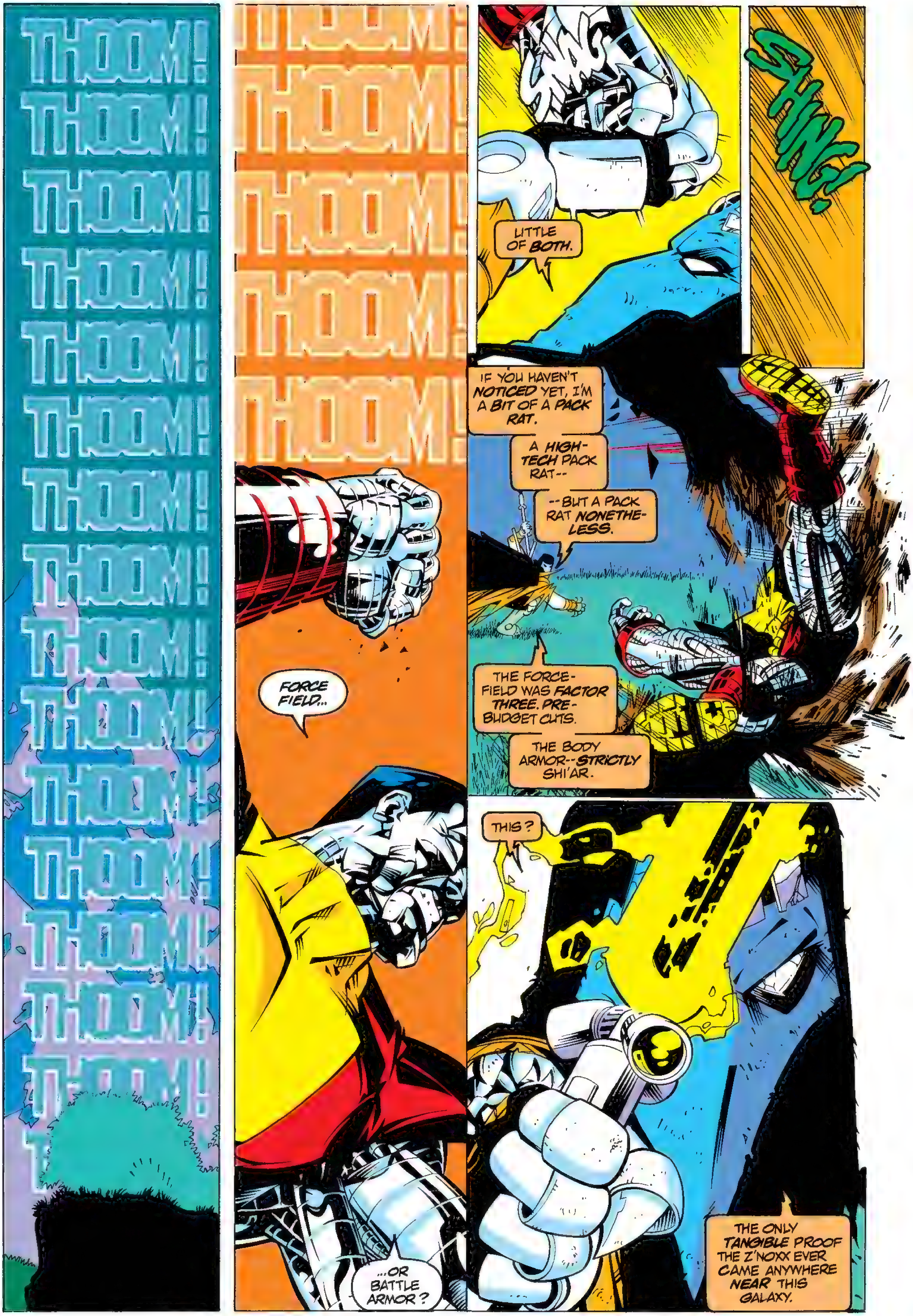

BRAKABABOOM!
THIS IS PRIVATE PROPERTY.
THANK YOU FOR LEAVING.
THAT'S HOW YOU "AVOID A PHYSICAL CONFRONTATION"?
YES, WELL...
... I DID PROMISE TO BE BRIEF.
THE OMNIUM-MESH SHOULD ABSORB THE BRUNT OF THE IMPACT...
JUST IN CASE IT DOESN'T...
GRAB!
... LET'S SKIP AHEAD TO THE RESCUE AND THE APOLOGY.
"APOLOGY"?
ON BEHALF OF COLOSSUS. HE'S HAD A LOT ON HIS MIND LATELY--
--AND I'M AFRAID HE'S A BIT ON THE CAUTIOUS SIDE.

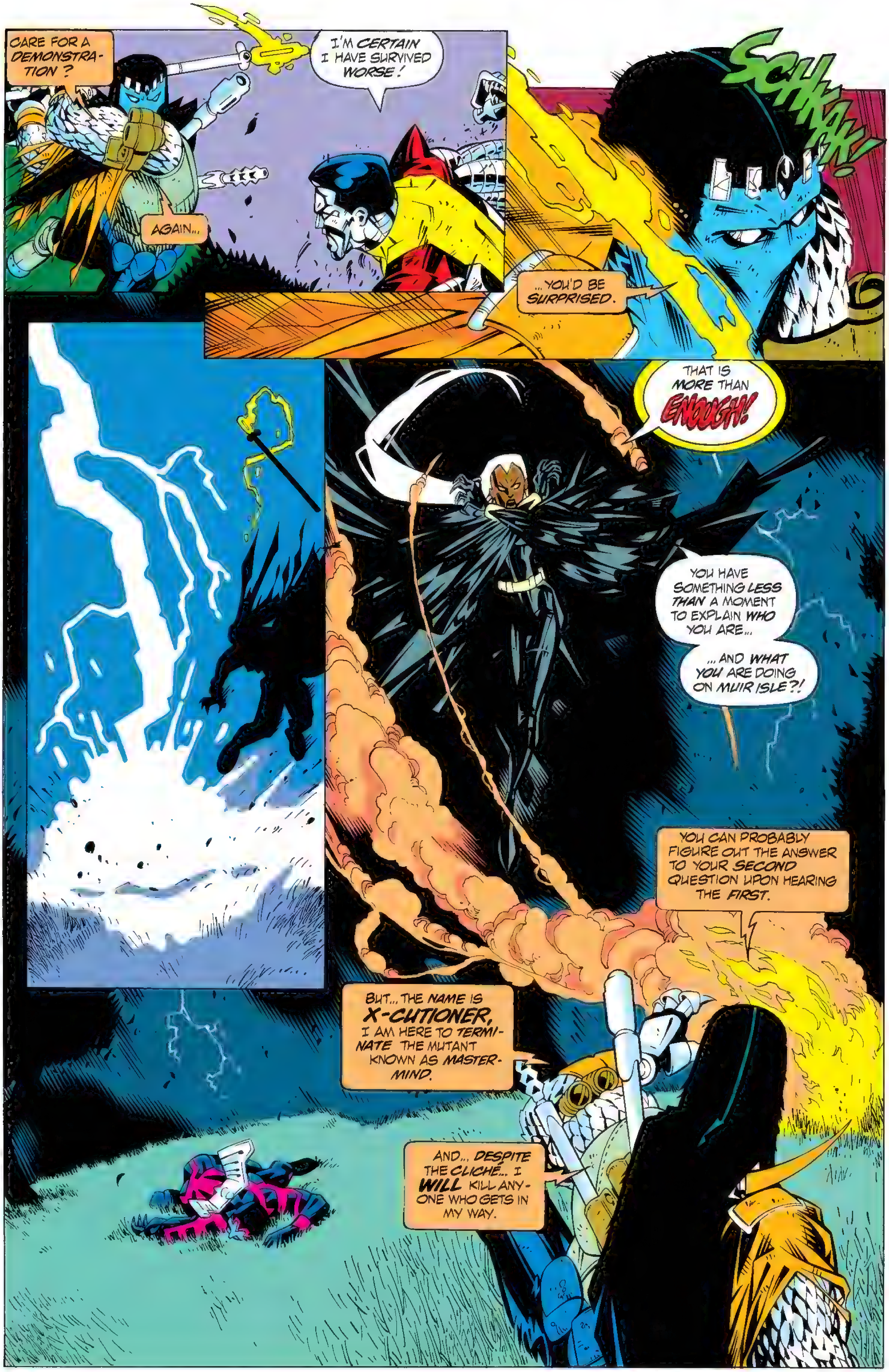

I MEAN, WE CAN'T ASSUME ANYONE IN A COSTUME WITHOUT AN "X" ON IT--
--IS AUTOMATICALLY A VILLAIN.
THEN AGAIN...
... "VILLAIN", "HERO"-- IT'S ALL A MATTER OF PERSPECTIVE...
YANK
...WOULDN'T YOU SAY?
THERE ARE SOME PEOPLE WHO MIGHT FIND MY GOAL--
--TO EXECUTE THE "EVIL MUTANTS" OF THE WORLD--
--TO BE QUITE ADMIRABLE.
WHILE OTHERS...
...LIKE SAY... THE X-MEN...
...MIGHT TRY TO STOP ME.
NEURO-CHARGE, COURSING THROUGH ME
CAN'T... MOVE.
AAAAAAAHH!
AS I SAID...
...A MATTER OF PERSPECTIVE.
STEP OUT OF MY WAY, COLOSSUS--
--AND I'LL SPARE YOU THE PAIN AND SUFFERING I'VE INFLICTED UPON YOUR TEAMMATES.
I DON'T BELIEVE THERE'S MUCH CHANCE OF THAT HAPPENING.
OH
YOU'D BE SURPRISED...

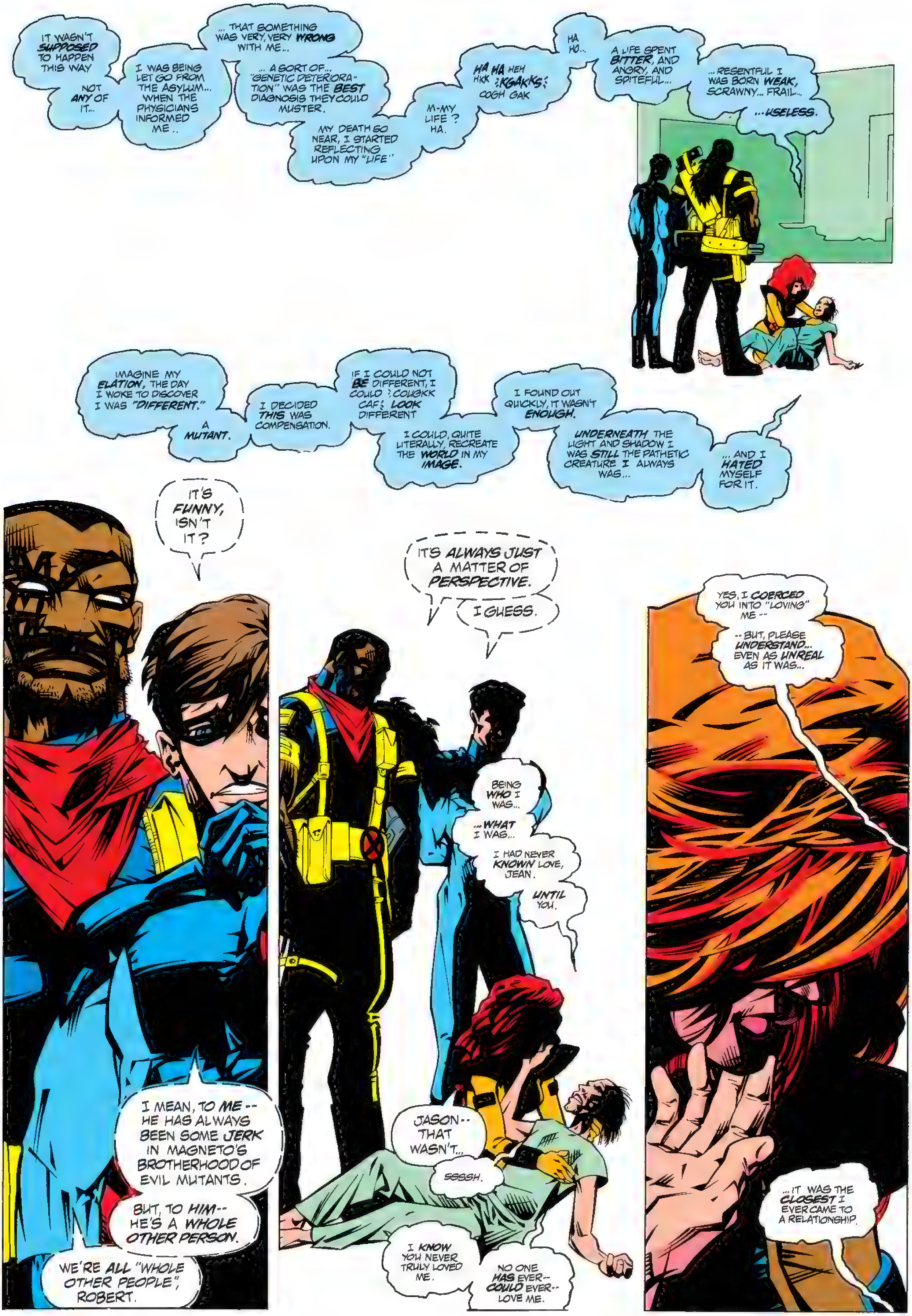

ELSEWHERE...
WE WILL NO LONGER TOLERATE OPPRESSION BY THE HUMANS!
ANY MUTANT WHO SEEKS TO DEFEND THEM WILL HIMSELF BECOME OUR ENEMY!
BISHOP -- I'M NOT GETTING PSIONIC IMPRINTS FROM ANY OF THESE "X-MEN."
WITH THE EXCEPTION OF BOBBY--
--THESE PEOPLE ARE ALL ILLUSIONS!
WHICH, IF WE ARE ON A MINDSCAPE AS WE'VE SURMISED--
--MAKE THEM NO LESS DEADLY THAN IF THEY WERE "REAL".
KRAK!
YA' GOT THAT RIGHT, BUB.
WE KILL YA' HERE--
--YER BODY'S ICED AS WELL!
PROFESSOR, I, UH... COMMAND YOU TO STOP.
AND WHAT AN ENTHUSIASTIC "COMMAND" IT IS, ROBERT!
PERHAPS YOU'RE SAVING YOUR ENERGY FOR SOME LAST MINUTE BEGGING?
PERHAPS.
WHY DO I SUDDENLY FEEL I WALKED IN HALF WAY THROUGH THE MOVIE?
TEN MINUTES AGO I WAS LEADER OF THE X-MEN...
...AND NOW YOU'RE A VICTIM OF YOUR AMBITION.
THOP
THOP
OW.
YOU, JEAN AND I ARE BEING EXPOSED TO THE FLIPSIDE OF OUR DESIRES.
IN YOUR CASE, "ICEMASTER," YOU SIMPLY STAND REVEALED FOR THE EXCESS BAGGAGE THAT YOU ARE.
YOU'RE DEAD WEIGHT TO THE X-MEN--
--AND SOON YOU'LL BE JUST DEAD.

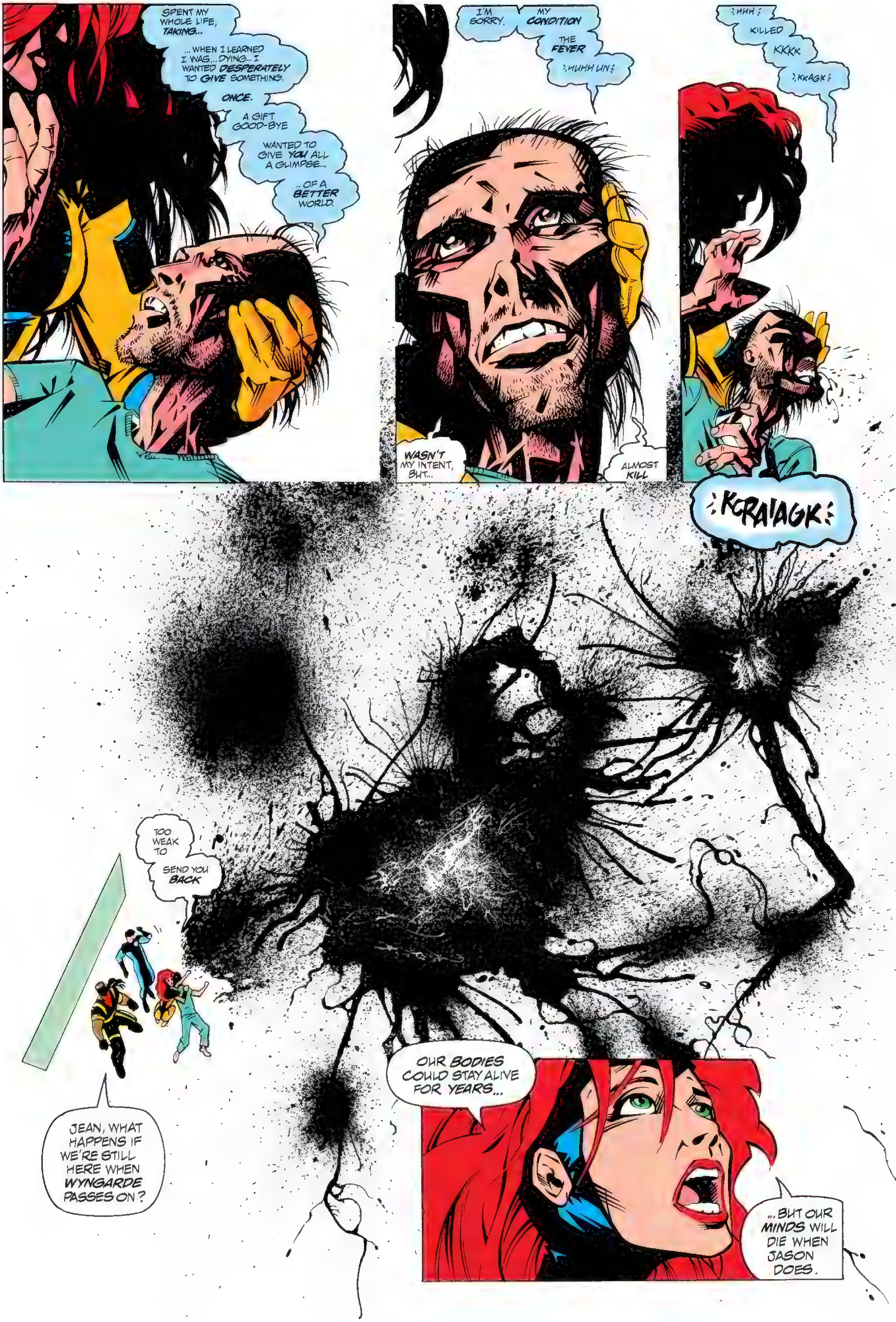

YOU ARE NOT STRONG ENOUGH TO RESIST OUUURTT?!
SHUT-UP, PHANTOM!
SOMEONE IS TRYING TO PUSH OUR BUTTONS-- TO FIND OUT WHAT MAKES US TICK.
HERE'S WHERE I RETURN THE FAVOR!
YOU'RE TELEKINETIC POWER...?
PULLING ME...
... IN TWO?!
"SHREDDING" IS MORE LIKE IT.
BUT I'M NOT ABOUT TO ARGUE SEMANTICS WITH SOMEONE'S STRAY THOUGHT.
THAT LETTER, AGAIN.
TO JEAN
TO JEAN
LET'S SEE WHAT'S SO IMPORTANT.
PUT THAT DOWN, RED!
IT'S--IT'S NOT IMPORTANT.
SHHH.
DEAR JEAN
FINAL HOURS
MAKE AMENDS

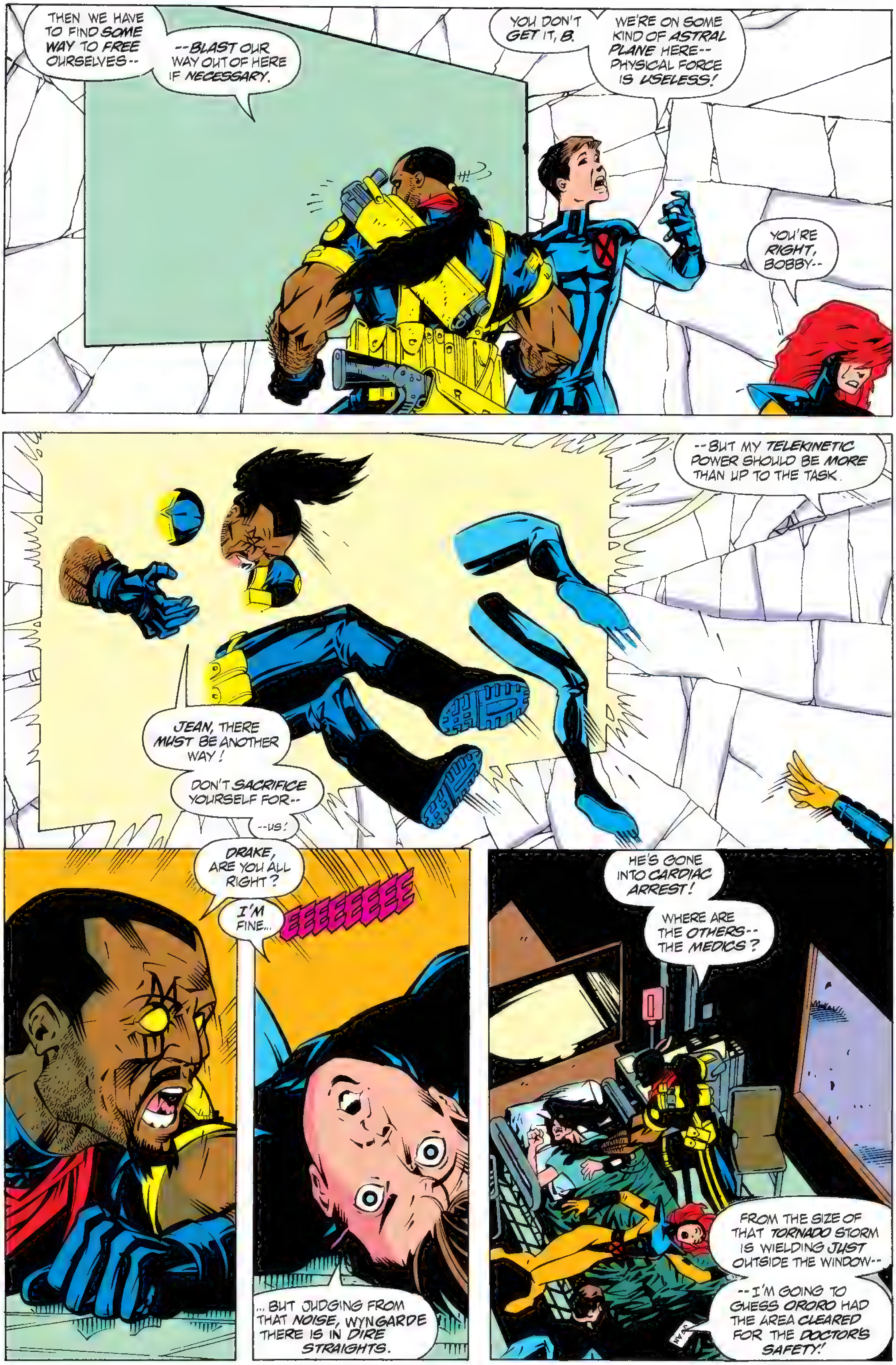

I REMEMBER NOW!
I CAME TO MUIR ISLAND TO HONOR THE LAST REQUEST OF A DYING MAN.
I WAS NAIVE TO BELIEVE YOUR DEATHBED CONVERSATION.
LET HIM GO, JASON WYNGARDE!
MASTER-MIND?
ABOUT TIME.
I'M NOT... STRONG ENOUGH TO FIGHT THE
EFFECTS OF THE FEVER ON MY OWN.
NO SURPRISE, REALLY.
STRENGTH--
--PHYSICAL, MORAL, OR OTHERWISE--
--HAS NEVER BEEN MY FORTE.
WAS RATHER HOPING TO CHANGE THAT
ON MY WAY
OUT.
JASON?!
I'M NOT EVEN GOING TO PRETEND TO UNDERSTAND WHAT JUST HAPPENED.
OKAY, SO I GOT THE PART THAT MASTERMIND HAS BEEN MASTERING OUR MINDS--
--BUT WHERE ARE OUR BODIES?!
DESPITE HIS WEAKENED STATE, THIS "MASTERMIND" SEEMS TO BE PROVIDING ANSWERS!
ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THAT FRAME IS THE ROOM WHERE THE THREE OF US APPROACHED THE MAN'S BEDSIDE.
IT'S ALL COMING BACK NOW!
BUT IF WE'RE IN "HERE"--
--THEN ESSENTIALLY WE'RE ON THE OUTSIDE LOOKING IN...
...AT REALITY?!

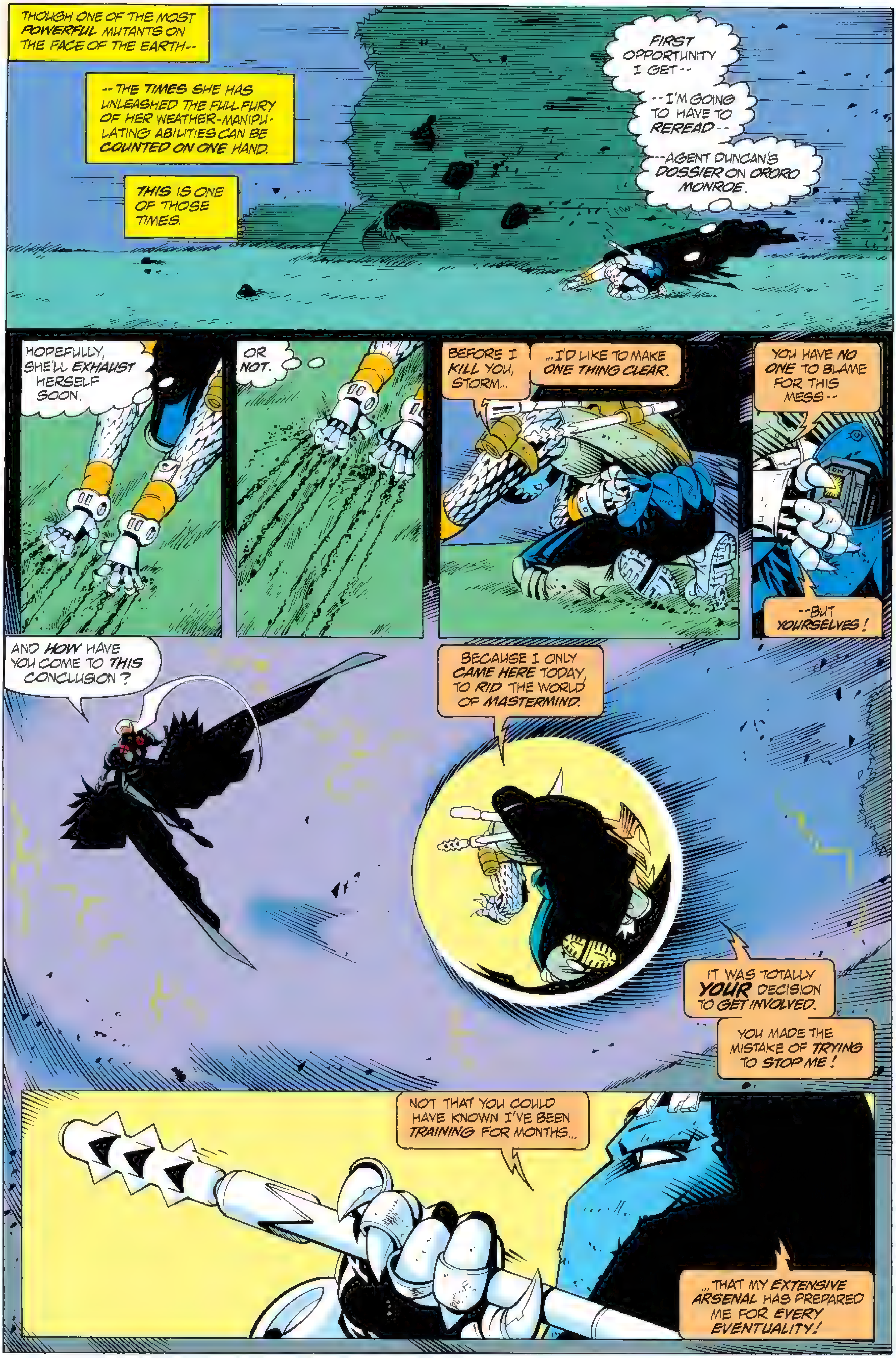

THOOM! THOOM! THOOM! THOOM! THOOM! THOOM! THOOM! THOOM! THOOM! THOOM! THOOM! THOOM! THOOM! THOOM! THOOM!
THOOM! THOOM! THOOM! THOOM! THOOM!
FORCE FIELD...
...OR BATTLE ARMOR?
LITTLE OF BOTH.
SHING!
IF YOU HAVEN'T NOTICED YET, I'M A BIT OF A PACK RAT.
A HIGH-TECH PACK RAT--
--BUT A PACK RAT NONETHELESS.
THE FORCE-FIELD WAS FACTOR THREE. PRE-BUDGET CUTS.
THE BODY ARMOR--STRICTLY SHI'AR.
THIS?
THE ONLY TANGIBLE PROOF THE Z'NOXX EVER CAME ANYWHERE NEAR THIS GALAXY.

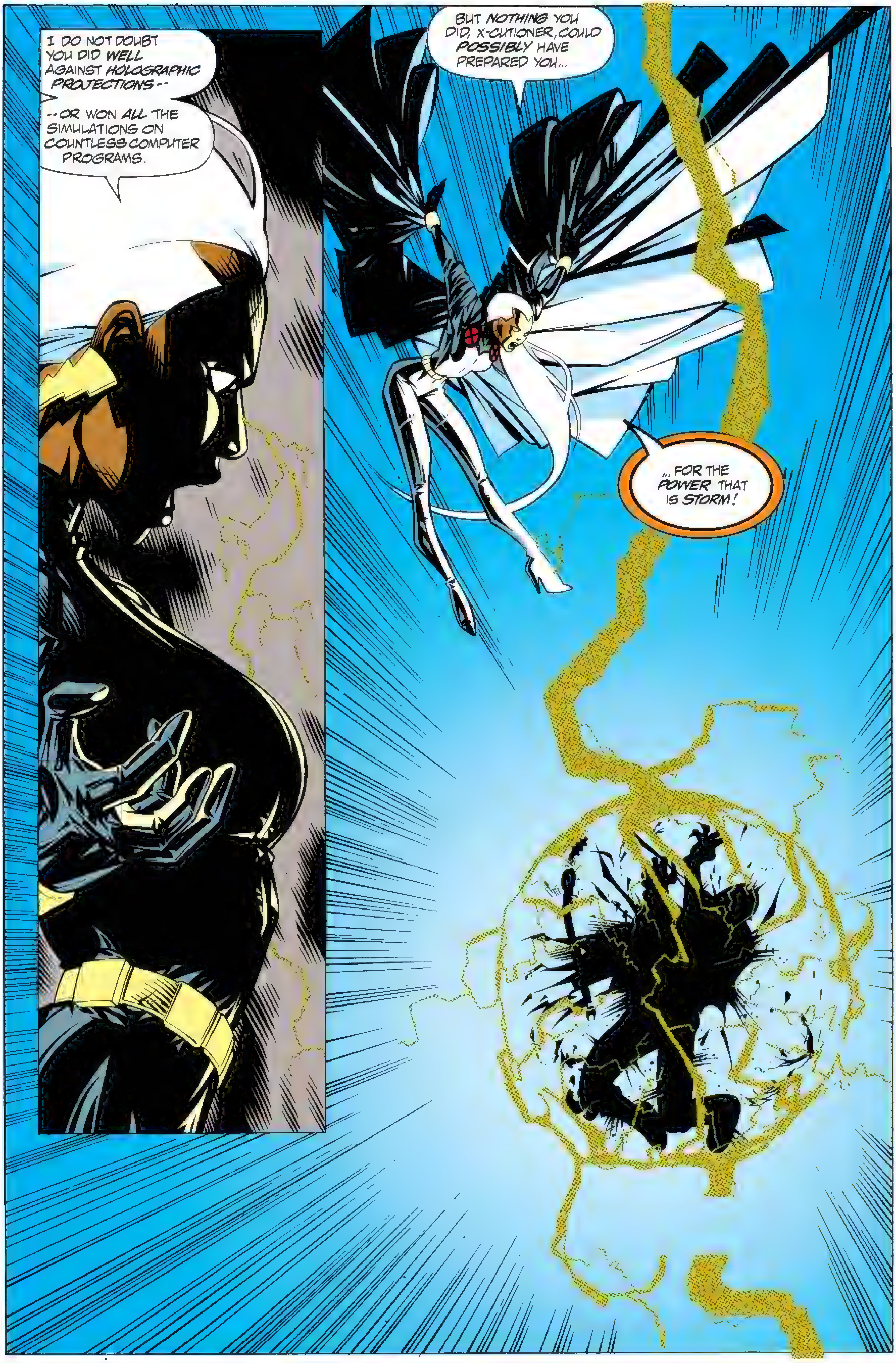

CARE FOR A DEMONSTRATION?
AGAIN...
I'M CERTAIN I HAVE SURVIVED WORSE!
SCHKAK!
...YOU'D BE SURPRISED.
THAT IS MORE THAN ENOUGH!
YOU HAVE SOMETHING LESS THAN A MOMENT TO EXPLAIN WHO YOU ARE...
...AND WHAT YOU ARE DOING ON MUIR ISLE?!
YOU CAN PROBABLY FIGURE OUT THE ANSWER TO YOUR SECOND QUESTION UPON HEARING THE FIRST.
BUT... THE NAME IS X-CUTIONER, I AM HERE TO TERMINATE THE MUTANT KNOWN AS MASTERMIND.
AND... DESPITE THE CLICHÉ... I WILL KILL ANYONE WHO GETS IN MY WAY.

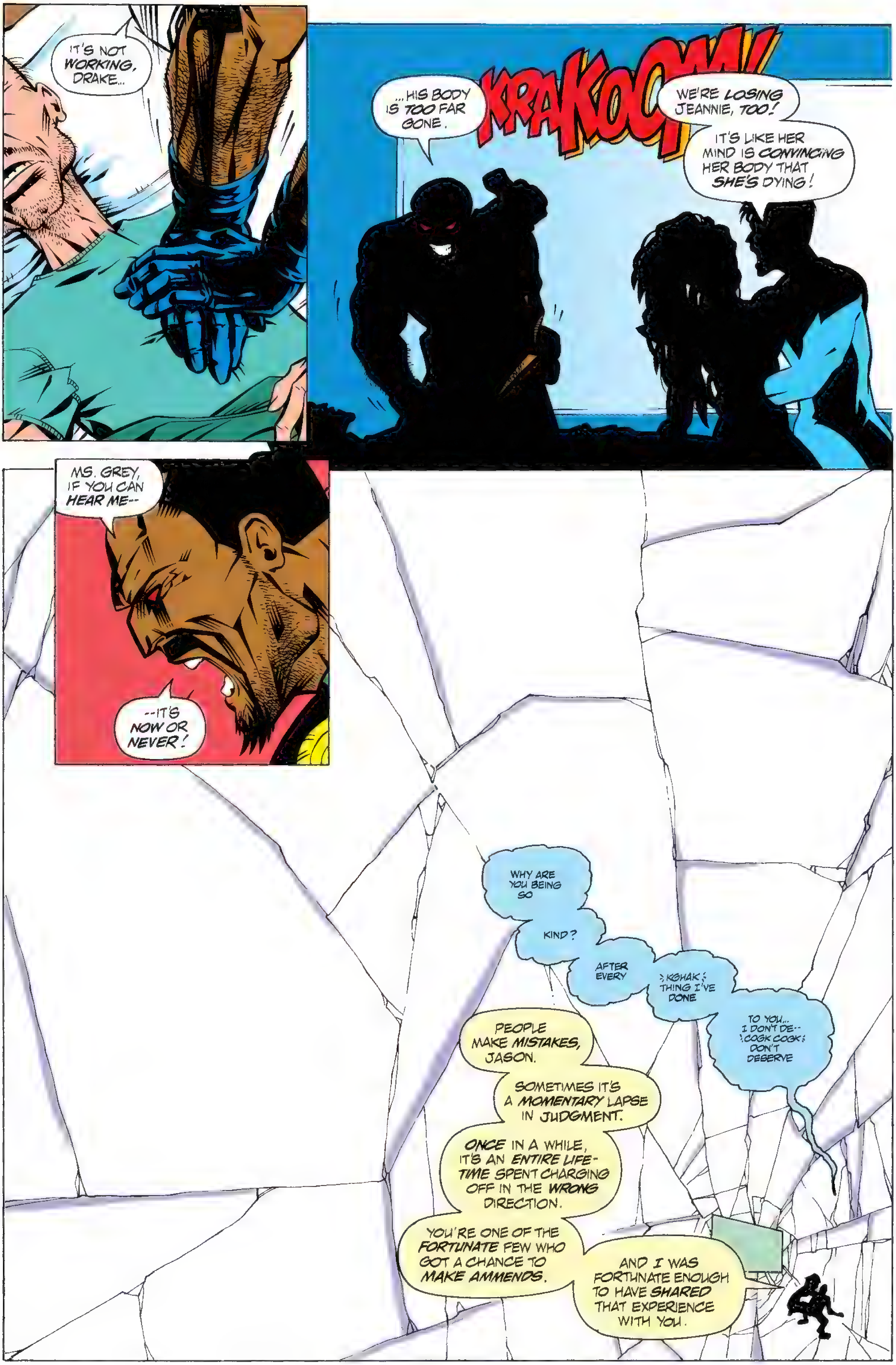

IT WASN'T SUPPOSED TO HAPPEN THIS WAY
NOT ANY OF IT...
I WAS BEING LET GO FROM THE ASYLUM... WHEN THE PHYSICIANS INFORMED ME..
... THAT SOMETHING WAS VERY, VERY WRONG WITH ME...
... A SORT OF... "GENETIC DETERIORATION" WAS THE BEST DIAGNOSIS THEY COULD MUSTER.
MY DEATH SO NEAR, I STARTED REFLECTING UPON MY "LIFE"
M-MY LIFE? HA.
HA HA HEH HKK :KGAKKS: COGH GAK
HA HO...
A LIFE SPENT BITTER, AND ANGRY, AND SPITEFUL...
... RESENTFUL I WAS BORN WEAK, SCRAWNY... FRAIL...
...USELESS.
IMAGINE MY ELATION, THE DAY I WOKE TO DISCOVER I WAS "DIFFERENT."
A MUTANT.
I DECIDED THIS WAS COMPENSATION.
IF I COULD NOT BE DIFFERENT, I COULD :COUGKK CAF: LOOK DIFFERENT
I COULD, QUITE LITERALLY, RECREATE THE WORLD IN MY IMAGE.
I FOUND OUT QUICKLY, IT WASN'T ENOUGH.
UNDERNEATH THE LIGHT AND SHADOW I WAS STILL THE PATHETIC CREATURE I ALWAYS WAS...
... AND I HATED MYSELF FOR IT.
IT'S FUNNY, ISN'T IT?
I MEAN, TO ME -- HE HAS ALWAYS BEEN SOME JERK IN MAGNETO'S BROTHERHOOD OF EVIL MUTANTS.
BUT, TO HIM -- HE'S A WHOLE OTHER PERSON.
WE'RE ALL "WHOLE OTHER PEOPLE", ROBERT.
IT'S ALWAYS JUST A MATTER OF PERSPECTIVE.
I GUESS.
BEING WHO I WAS...
...WHAT I WAS...
I HAD NEVER KNOWN LOVE, JEAN.
UNTIL YOU.
JASON -- THAT WASN'T...
SSSSH.
I KNOW YOU NEVER TRULY LOVED ME.
NO ONE HAS EVER -- COULD EVER -- LOVE ME.
YES, I COERCED YOU INTO "LOVING" ME --
-- BUT, PLEASE UNDERSTAND... EVEN AS UNREAL AS IT WAS...
...IT WAS THE CLOSEST I EVER CAME TO A RELATIONSHIP.

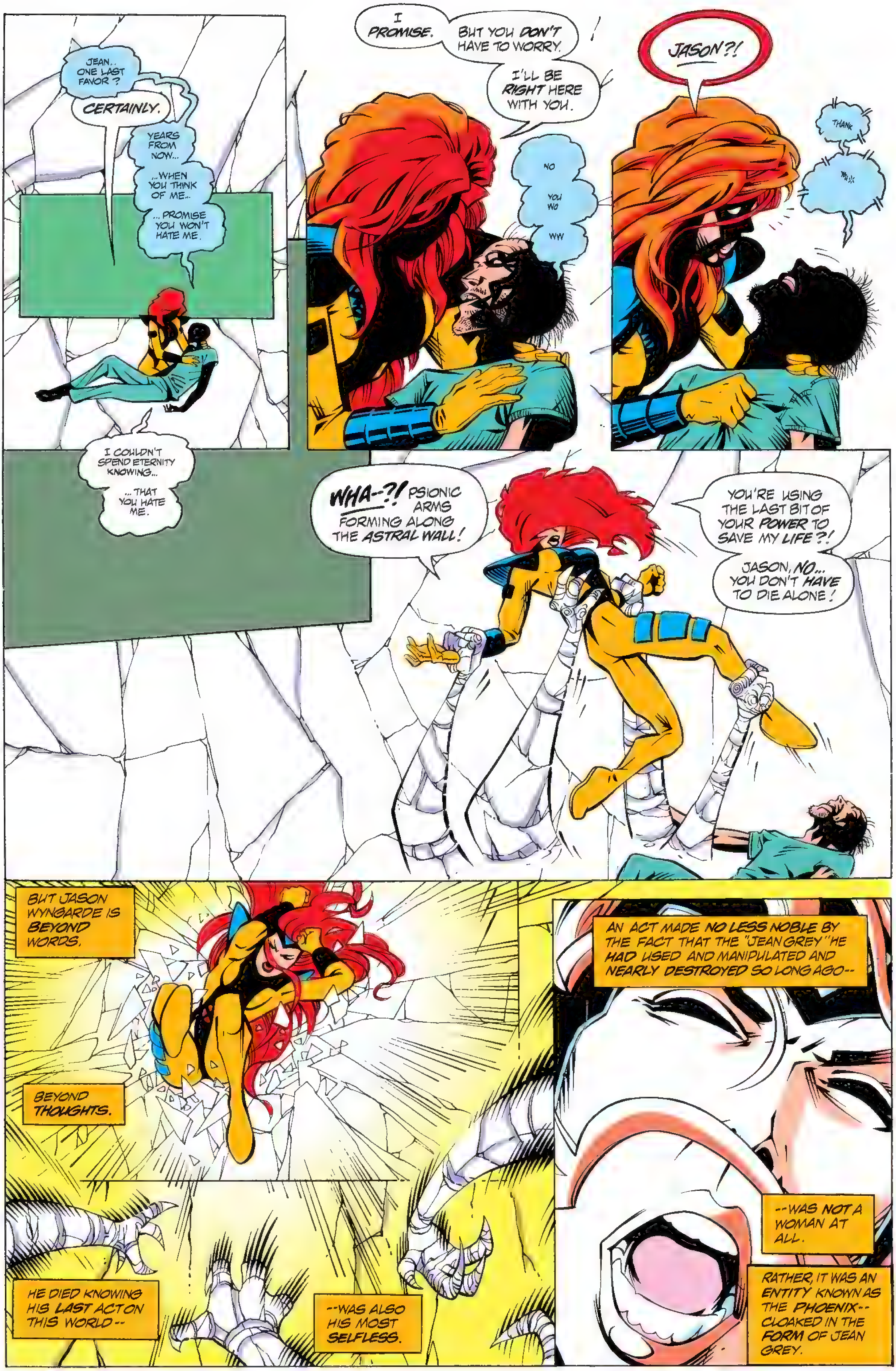

SPENT MY WHOLE LIFE, TAKING...
...WHEN I LEARNED I WAS... DYING... I WANTED DESPERATELY TO GIVE SOMETHING.
ONCE.
A GIFT GOOD-BYE
WANTED TO GIVE YOU ALL A GLIMPSE...
...OF A BETTER WORLD.
I'M SORRY.
MY CONDITION
THE FEVER
HUHH UN
WASN'T MY INTENT, BUT...
ALMOST KILL
HHH
KILLED
KKKK
KKAGK
KCRAIAGK
TOO WEAK TO
SEND YOU BACK
JEAN, WHAT HAPPENS IF WE'RE STILL HERE WHEN WYNGARDE PASSES ON?
OUR BODIES COULD STAY ALIVE FOR YEARS...
...BUT OUR MINDS WILL DIE WHEN JASON DOES.

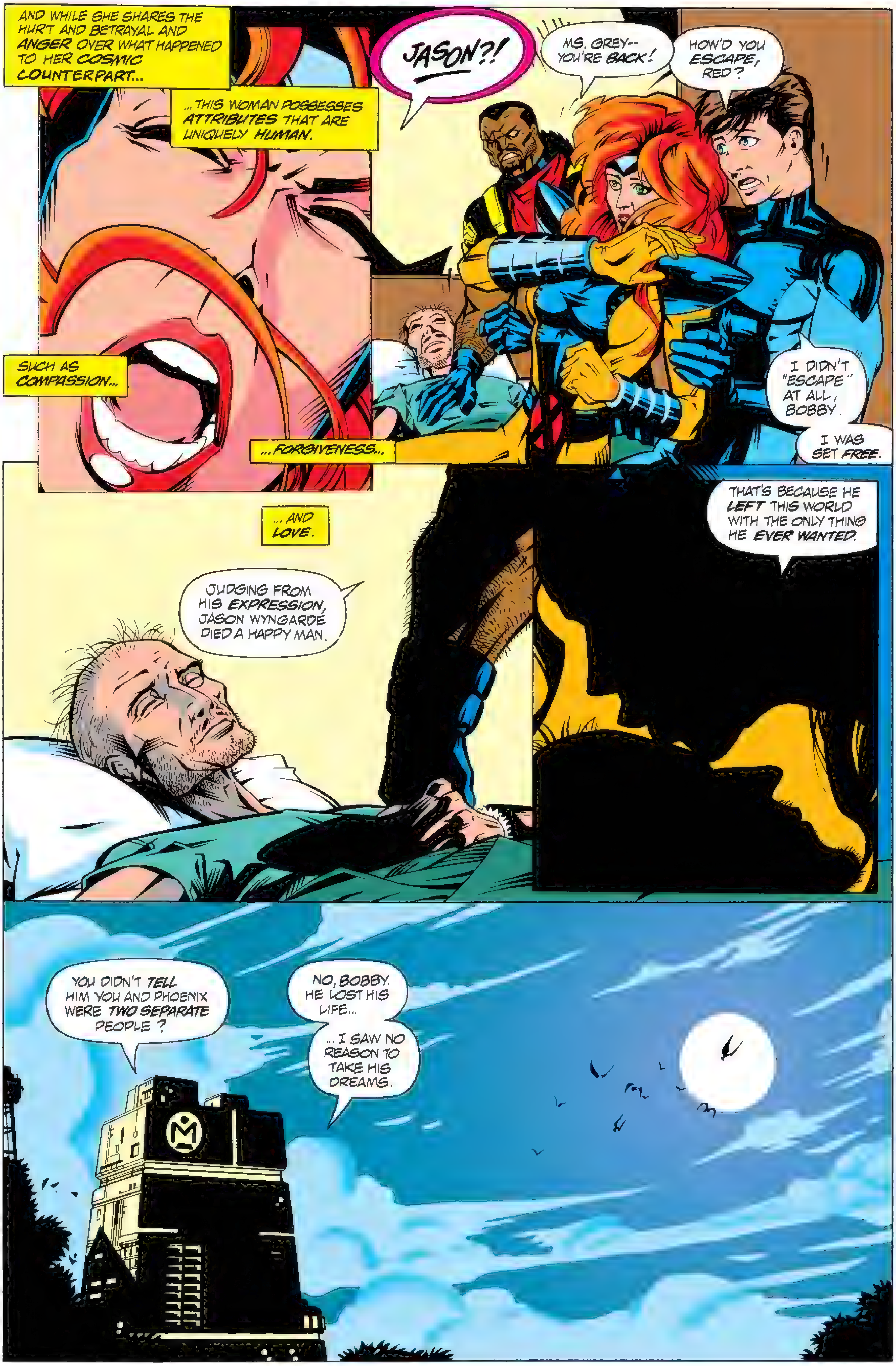

THEN WE HAVE TO FIND SOME WAY TO FREE OURSELVES--
--BLAST OUR WAY OUT OF HERE IF NECESSARY.
YOU DON'T GET IT, B.
WE'RE ON SOME KIND OF ASTRAL PLANE HERE-- PHYSICAL FORCE IS USELESS!
YOU'RE RIGHT, BOBBY--
--BUT MY TELEKINETIC POWER SHOULD BE MORE THAN UP TO THE TASK.
JEAN, THERE MUST BE ANOTHER WAY!
DON'T SACRIFICE YOURSELF FOR--
--US!
DRAKE, ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
I'M FINE...
EEEEEEEEE
...BUT JUDGING FROM THAT NOISE, WYNGARDE THERE IS IN DIRE STRAIGHTS.
HE'S GONE INTO CARDIAC ARREST!
WHERE ARE THE OTHERS-- THE MEDICS?
FROM THE SIZE OF THAT TORNADO STORM IS WIELDING JUST OUTSIDE THE WINDOW--
--I'M GOING TO GUESS ORORO HAD THE AREA CLEARED FOR THE DOCTOR'S SAFETY!

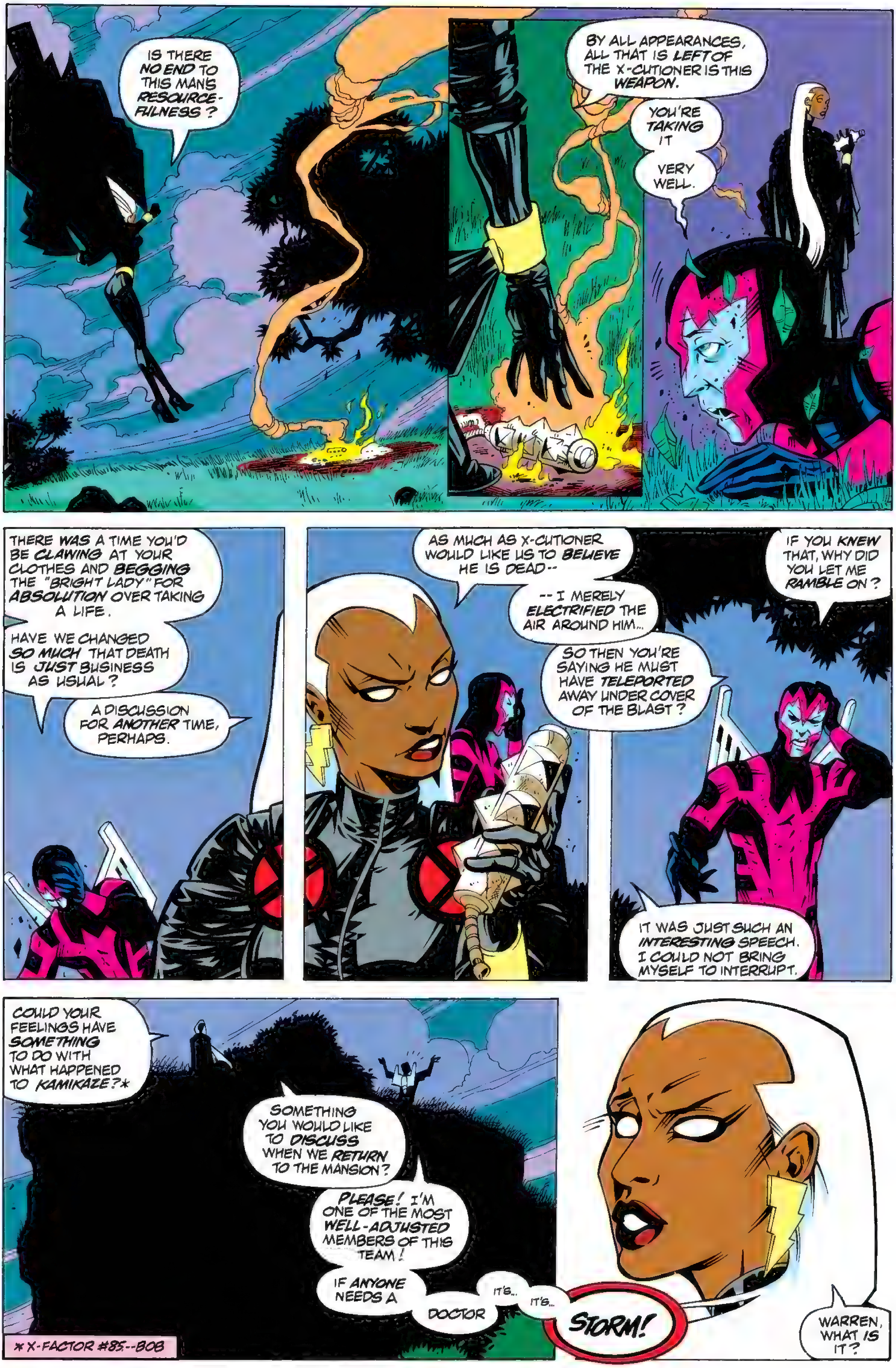

THOUGH ONE OF THE MOST POWERFUL MUTANTS ON THE FACE OF THE EARTH--
--THE TIMES SHE HAS UNLEASHED THE FULL FURY OF HER WEATHER-MANIPULATING ABILITIES CAN BE COUNTED ON ONE HAND.
THIS IS ONE OF THOSE TIMES.
FIRST OPPORTUNITY I GET--
--I'M GOING TO HAVE TO REREAD--
--AGENT DUNCAN'S DOSSIER ON ORORO MONROE.
HOPEFULLY, SHE'LL EXHAUST HERSELF SOON.
OR NOT.
BEFORE I KILL YOU, STORM...
...I'D LIKE TO MAKE ONE THING CLEAR.
YOU HAVE NO ONE TO BLAME FOR THIS MESS--
--BUT YOURSELVES!
AND HOW HAVE YOU COME TO THIS CONCLUSION?
BECAUSE I ONLY CAME HERE TODAY, TO RID THE WORLD OF MASTERMIND.
IT WAS TOTALLY YOUR DECISION TO GET INVOLVED.
YOU MADE THE MISTAKE OF TRYING TO STOP ME!
NOT THAT YOU COULD HAVE KNOWN I'VE BEEN TRAINING FOR MONTHS...
...THAT MY EXTENSIVE ARSENAL HAS PREPARED ME FOR EVERY EVENTUALITY!

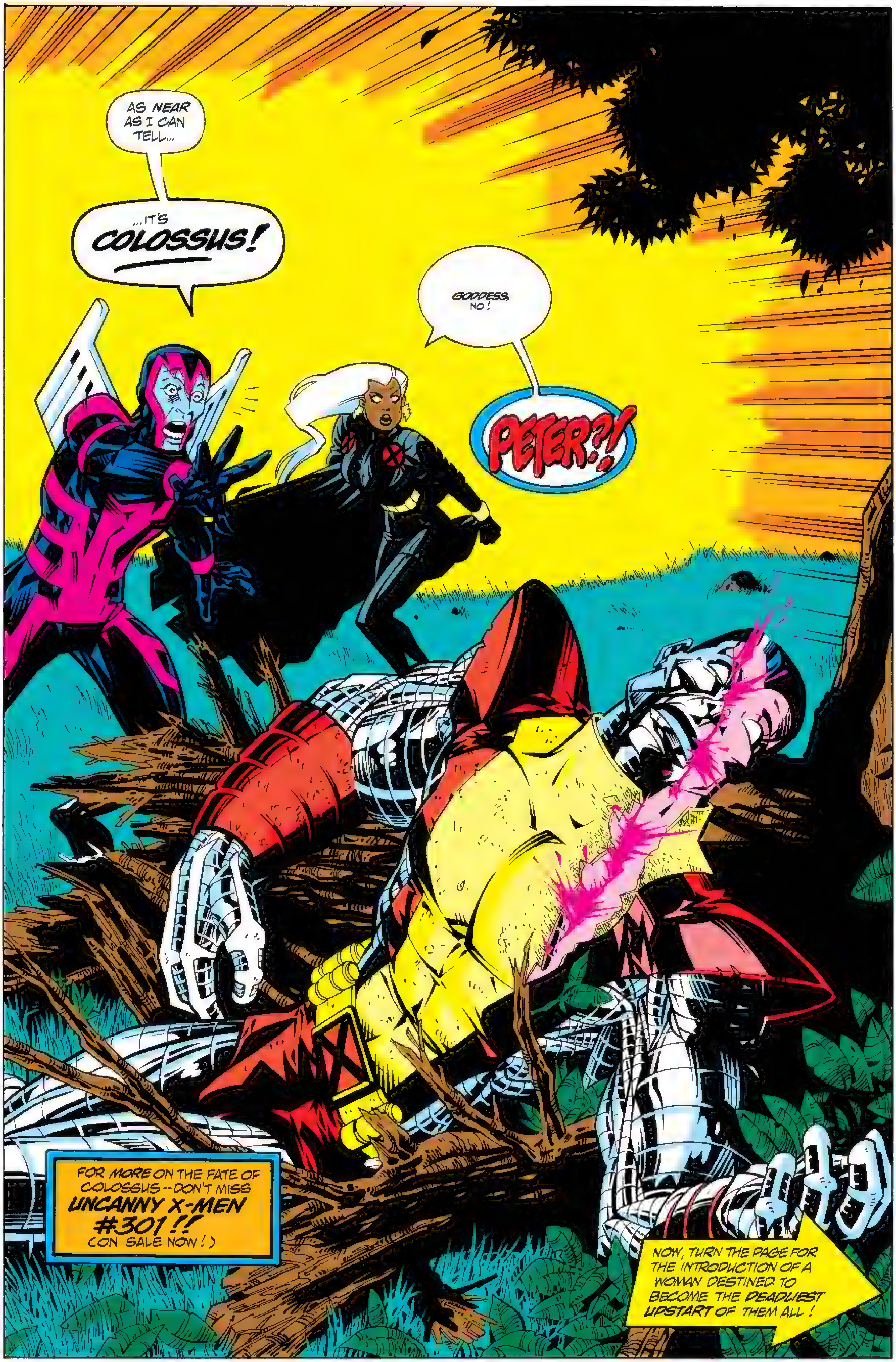

I DO NOT DOUBT YOU DID *WELL* AGAINST *HOLOGRAPHIC PROJECTIONS*--
--OR WON *ALL* THE SIMULATIONS ON COUNTLESS COMPUTER PROGRAMS.
BUT *NOTHING* YOU DID, X-CUTIONER, COULD *POSSIBLY* HAVE PREPARED YOU...
...FOR THE *POWER* THAT IS *STORM*!

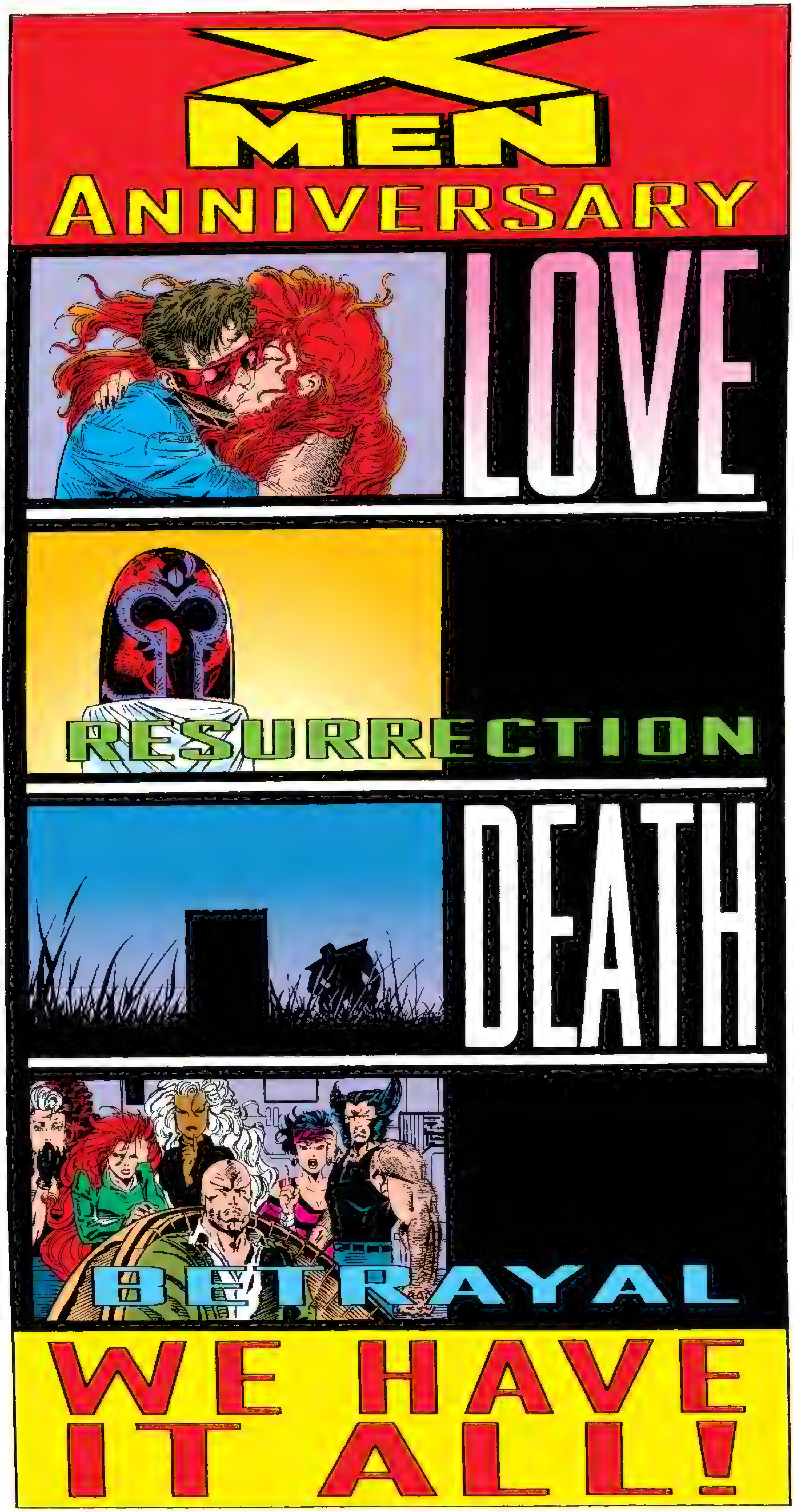

IT'S NOT WORKING, DRAKE...
...HIS BODY IS TOO FAR GONE.
KRAKOOM!!
WE'RE LOSING JEANNIE, TOO!
IT'S LIKE HER MIND IS CONVINCING HER BODY THAT SHE'S DYING!
MS. GREY, IF YOU CAN HEAR ME--
--IT'S NOW OR NEVER!
WHY ARE YOU BEING SO
KIND?
AFTER EVERY
KGHAK THING I'VE DONE
TO YOU... I DON'T DE-- *COGK COGK* DON'T DESERVE
PEOPLE MAKE MISTAKES, JASON.
SOMETIMES IT'S A MOMENTARY LAPSE IN JUDGMENT.
ONCE IN A WHILE, IT'S AN ENTIRE LIFE-TIME SPENT CHARGING OFF IN THE WRONG DIRECTION.
YOU'RE ONE OF THE FORTUNATE FEW WHO GOT A CHANCE TO MAKE AMMENDS.
AND I WAS FORTUNATE ENOUGH TO HAVE SHARED THAT EXPERIENCE WITH YOU.

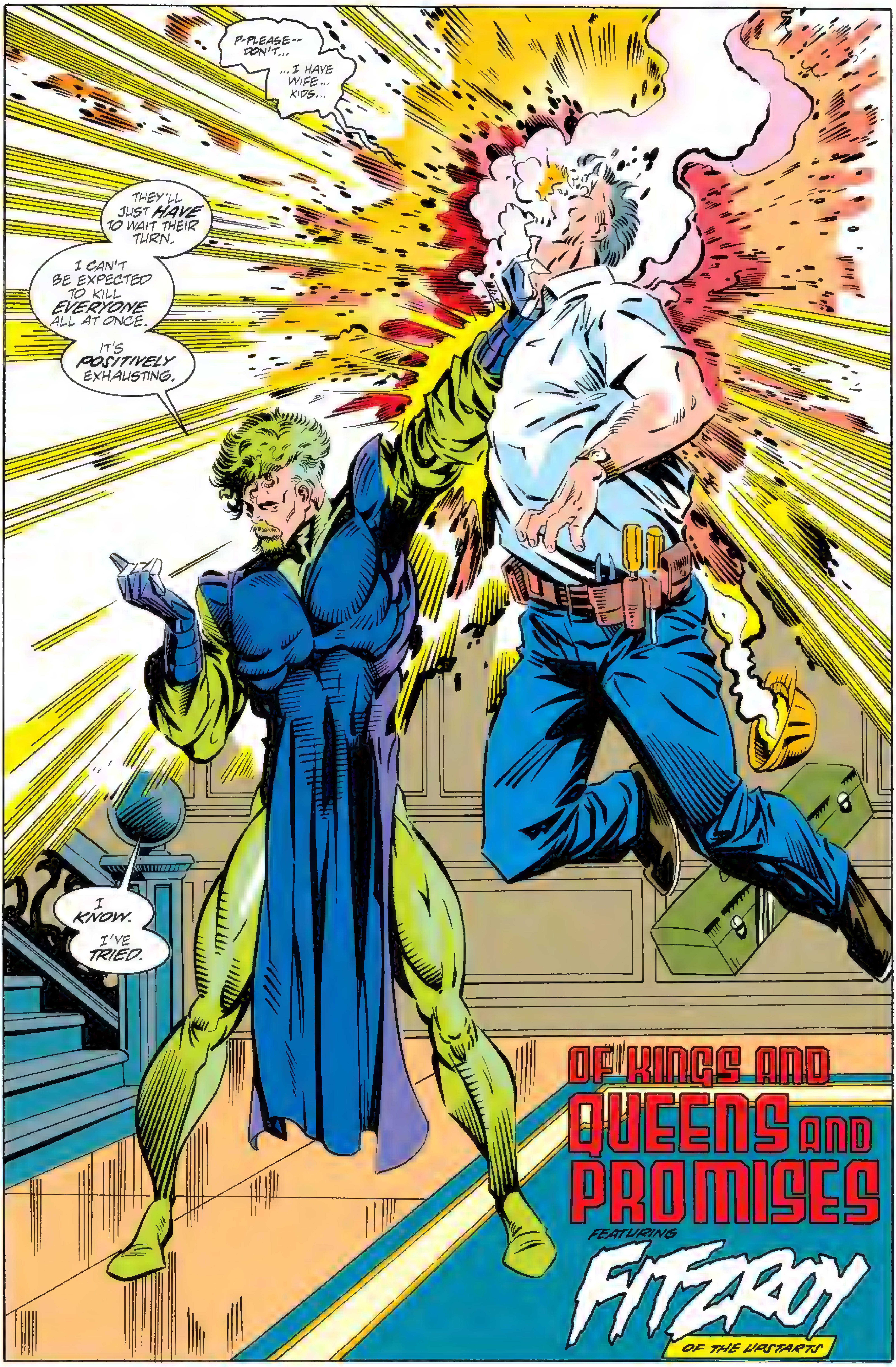

JEAN.. ONE LAST FAVOR ?
CERTAINLY.
YEARS FROM NOW...
...WHEN YOU THINK OF ME...
...PROMISE YOU WON'T HATE ME.
I COULDN'T SPEND ETERNITY KNOWING...
...THAT YOU HATE ME.
I PROMISE.
BUT YOU DON'T HAVE TO WORRY.
I'LL BE RIGHT HERE WITH YOU.
NO
YOU WO
WW
JASON?!
THANK
YOU..!
WHA--?! PSIONIC ARMS FORMING ALONG THE ASTRAL WALL!
YOU'RE USING THE LAST BIT OF YOUR POWER TO SAVE MY LIFE?!
JASON, NO... YOU DON'T HAVE TO DIE ALONE!
BUT JASON WYNGARDE IS BEYOND WORDS.
BEYOND THOUGHTS.
HE DIED KNOWING HIS LAST ACT ON THIS WORLD--
--WAS ALSO HIS MOST SELFLESS.
AN ACT MADE NO LESS NOBLE BY THE FACT THAT THE "JEAN GREY" HE HAD USED AND MANIPULATED AND NEARLY DESTROYED SO LONG AGO--
--WAS NOT A WOMAN AT ALL.
RATHER, IT WAS AN ENTITY KNOWN AS THE PHOENIX--CLOAKED IN THE FORM OF JEAN GREY.

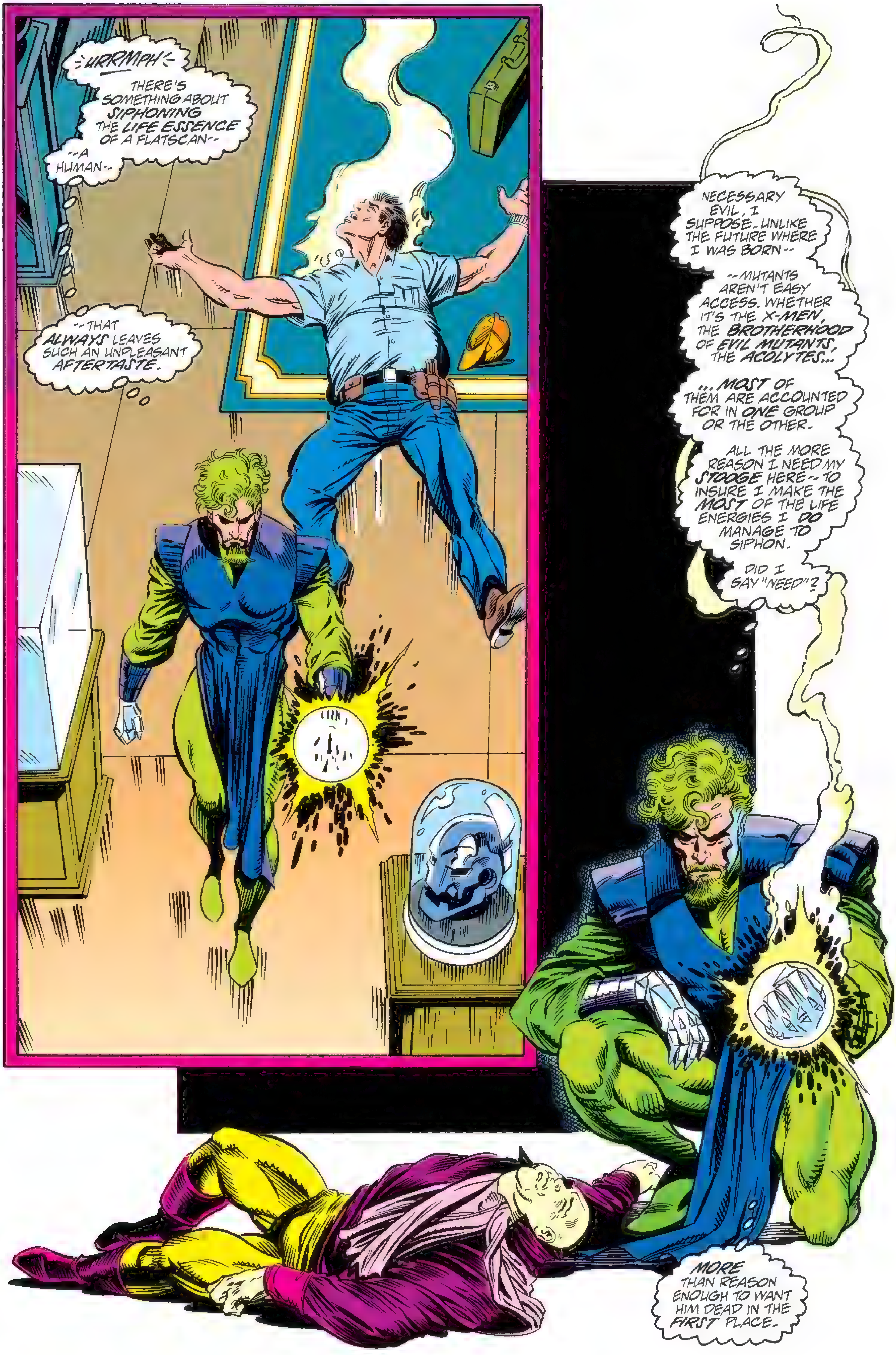

AND WHILE SHE SHARES THE HURT AND BETRAYAL AND ANGER OVER WHAT HAPPENED TO HER COSMIC COUNTERPART...
...THIS WOMAN POSSESSES ATTRIBUTES THAT ARE UNIQUELY HUMAN.
JASON?!
MS. GREY-- YOU'RE BACK!
HOW'D YOU ESCAPE, RED?
SUCH AS COMPASSION...
I DIDN'T "ESCAPE" AT ALL, BOBBY.
I WAS SET FREE.
...FORGIVENESS...
...AND LOVE.
THAT'S BECAUSE HE LEFT THIS WORLD WITH THE ONLY THING HE EVER WANTED.
JUDGING FROM HIS EXPRESSION, JASON WYNGARDE DIED A HAPPY MAN.
YOU DIDN'T TELL HIM YOU AND PHOENIX WERE TWO SEPARATE PEOPLE?
NO, BOBBY. HE LOST HIS LIFE...
...I SAW NO REASON TO TAKE HIS DREAMS.

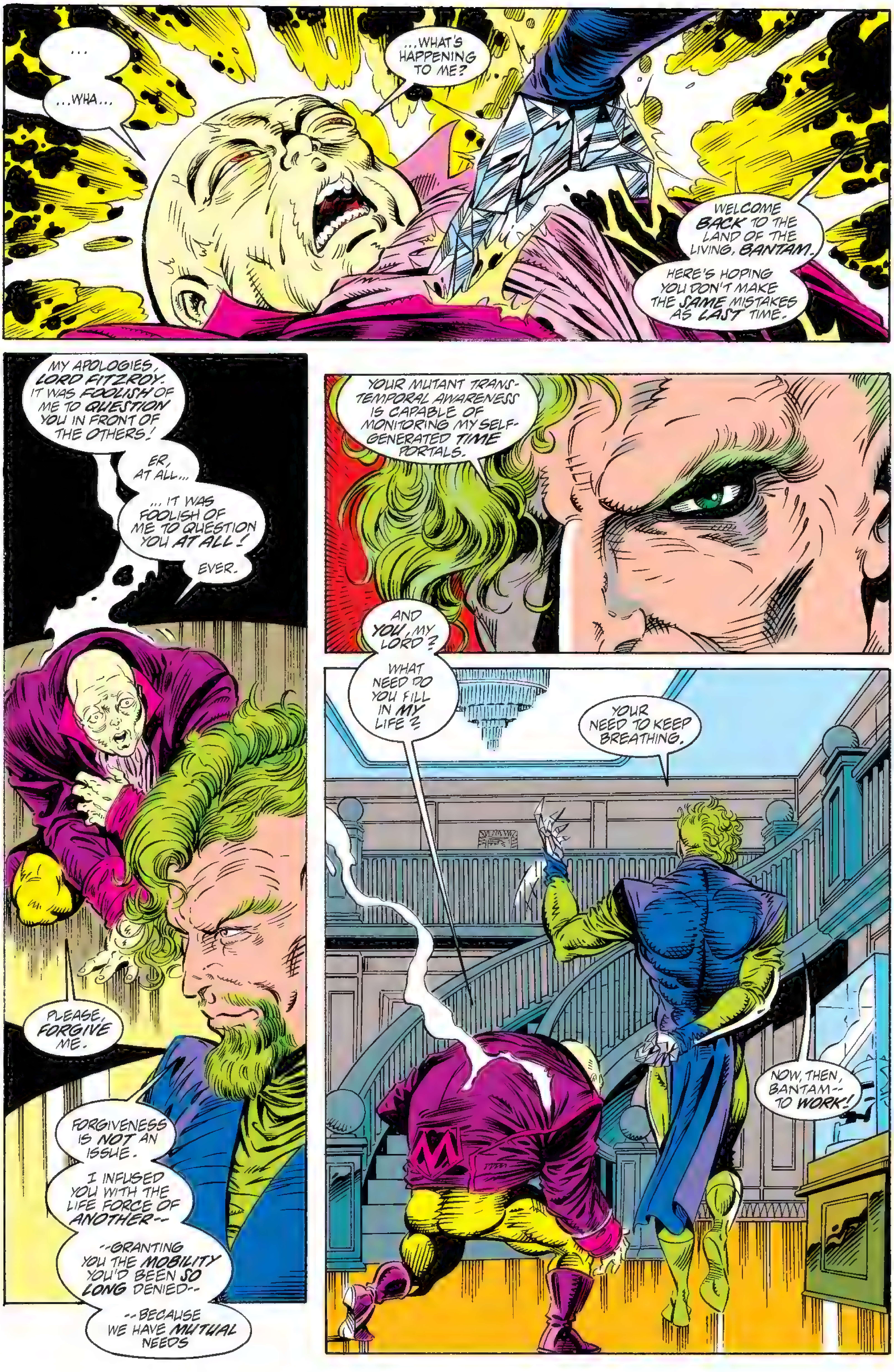

IS THERE *NO END* TO THIS MAN'S *RESOURCEFULNESS*?
BY ALL APPEARANCES, ALL THAT IS *LEFT* OF THE X-CUTIONER IS THIS *WEAPON*.
YOU'RE *TAKING* IT
VERY WELL.
THERE *WAS* A TIME YOU'D BE *CLAWING* AT YOUR CLOTHES AND *BEGGING* THE "BRIGHT LADY" FOR *ABSOLUTION* OVER TAKING A LIFE.
HAVE WE CHANGED *SO MUCH* THAT DEATH IS *JUST* BUSINESS AS USUAL?
A DISCUSSION FOR *ANOTHER* TIME, PERHAPS.
AS MUCH AS X-CUTIONER WOULD LIKE US TO *BELIEVE* HE IS DEAD--
--I MERELY *ELECTRIFIED* THE AIR AROUND HIM...
SO THEN YOU'RE SAYING HE MUST HAVE *TELEPORTED* AWAY UNDER COVER OF THE BLAST?
IF YOU *KNEW* THAT, WHY DID YOU LET ME *RAMBLE* ON?
IT WAS JUST SUCH AN *INTERESTING* SPEECH. I COULD NOT BRING MYSELF TO INTERRUPT.
COULD YOUR FEELINGS HAVE *SOMETHING* TO DO WITH WHAT HAPPENED TO *KAMIKAZE*?*
SOMETHING YOU WOULD LIKE TO *DISCUSS* WHEN WE *RETURN* TO THE MANSION?
PLEASE! I'M ONE OF THE MOST *WELL-ADJUSTED* MEMBERS OF THIS TEAM!
IF *ANYONE* NEEDS A
DOCTOR
IT'S..
IT'S..
STORM!
WARREN, WHAT *IS* IT?
*X-FACTOR #85.--BOB

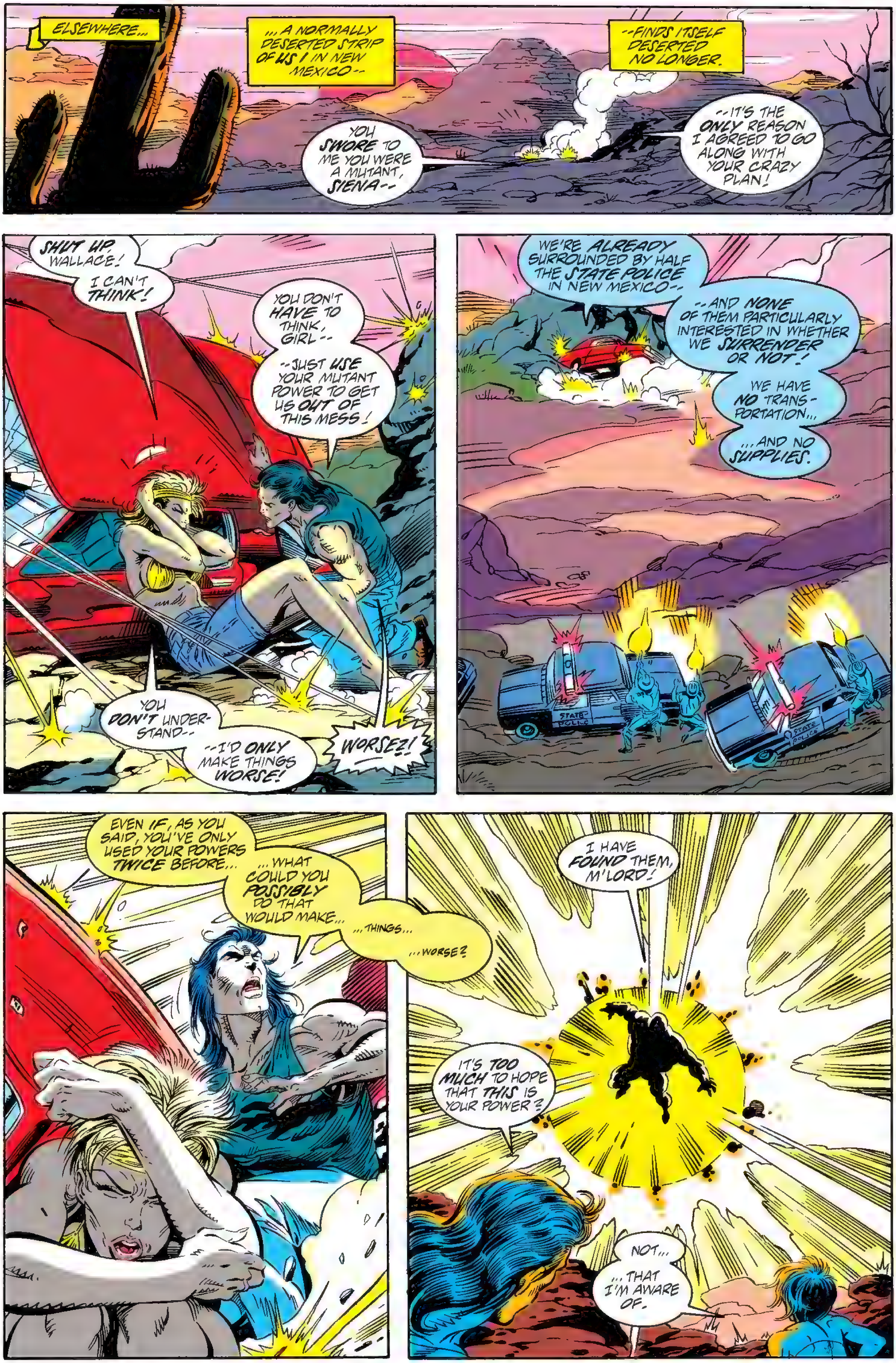

AS NEAR AS I CAN TELL...
...IT'S COLOSSUS!
GODDESS, NO!
PETER?!
FOR MORE ON THE FATE OF COLOSSUS--DON'T MISS UNCANNY X-MEN #301!! (ON SALE NOW!)
NOW, TURN THE PAGE FOR THE INTRODUCTION OF A WOMAN DESTINED TO BECOME THE DEADLIEST UPSTART OF THEM ALL!

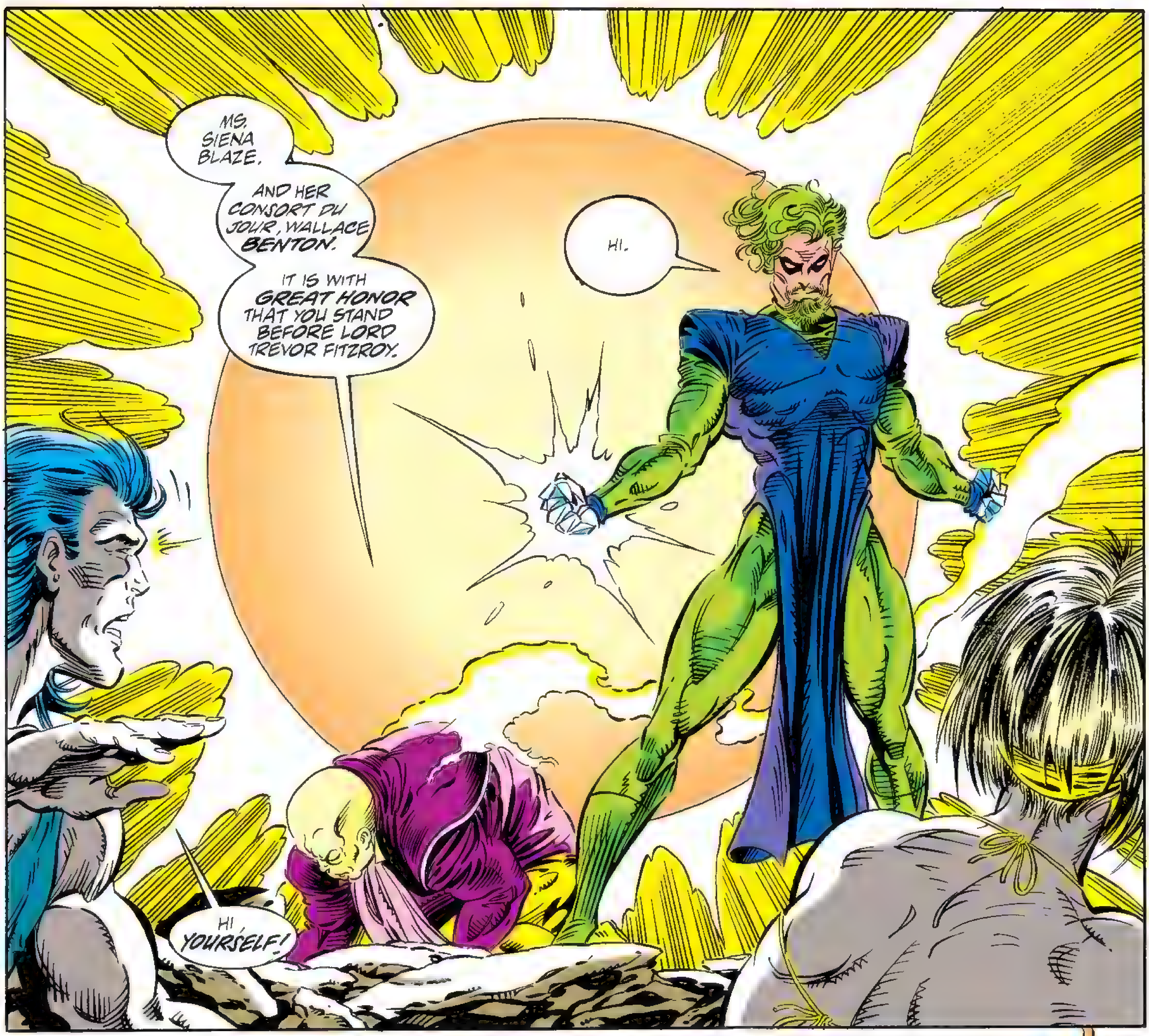

X-MEN
ANNIVERSARY
LOVE
RESURRECTION
DEATH
BETRAYAL
WE HAVE IT ALL!

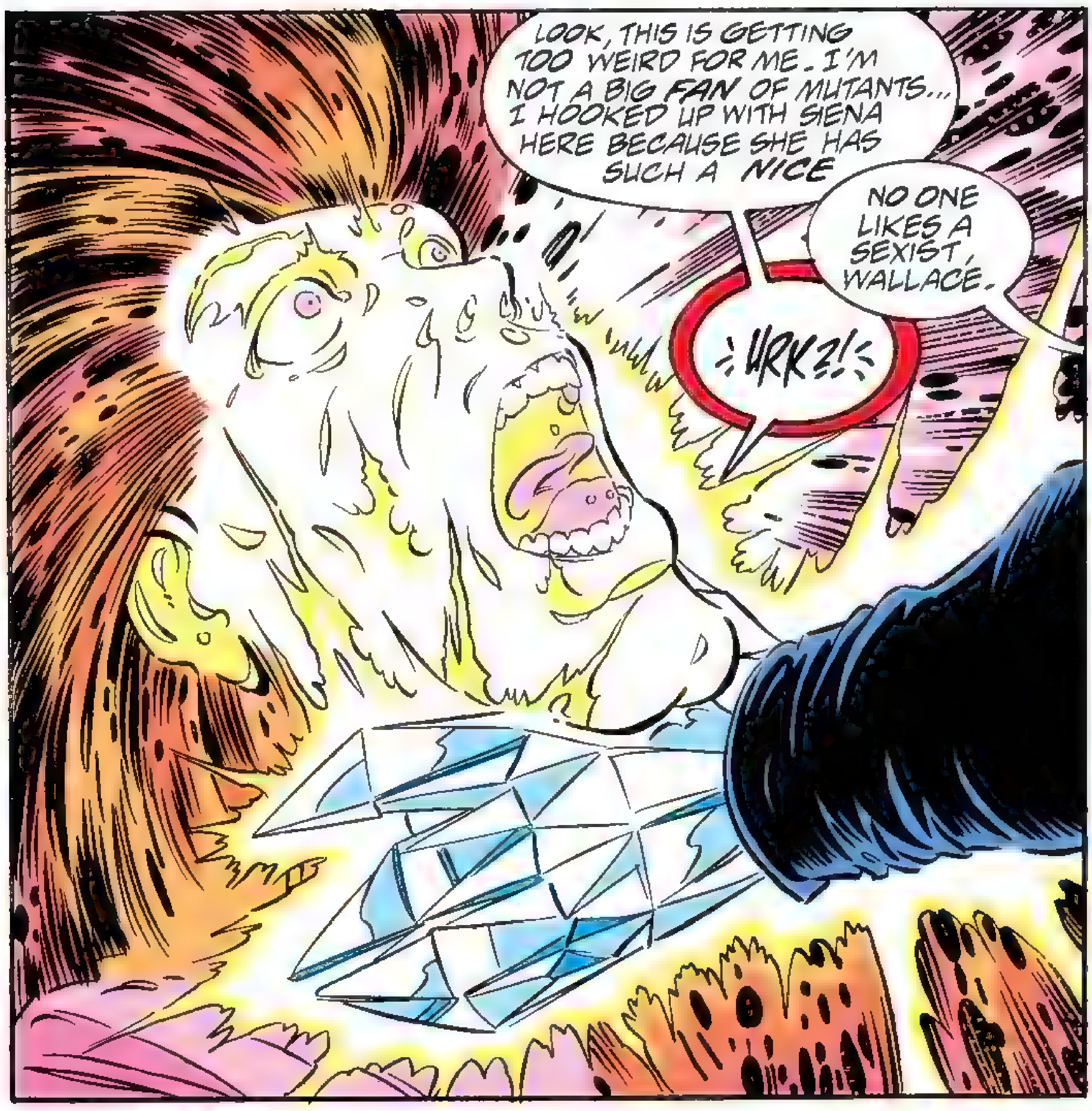

P-PLEASE-- DON'T... ...I HAVE WIFE... KIDS...
THEY'LL JUST *HAVE* TO WAIT THEIR TURN.
I CAN'T BE EXPECTED TO KILL *EVERYONE* ALL AT ONCE.
IT'S *POSITIVELY* EXHAUSTING.
I *KNOW.* I'VE *TRIED.*
OF KINGS AND QUEENS AND PROMISES
FEATURING
FITZROY
OF THE UPSTARTS

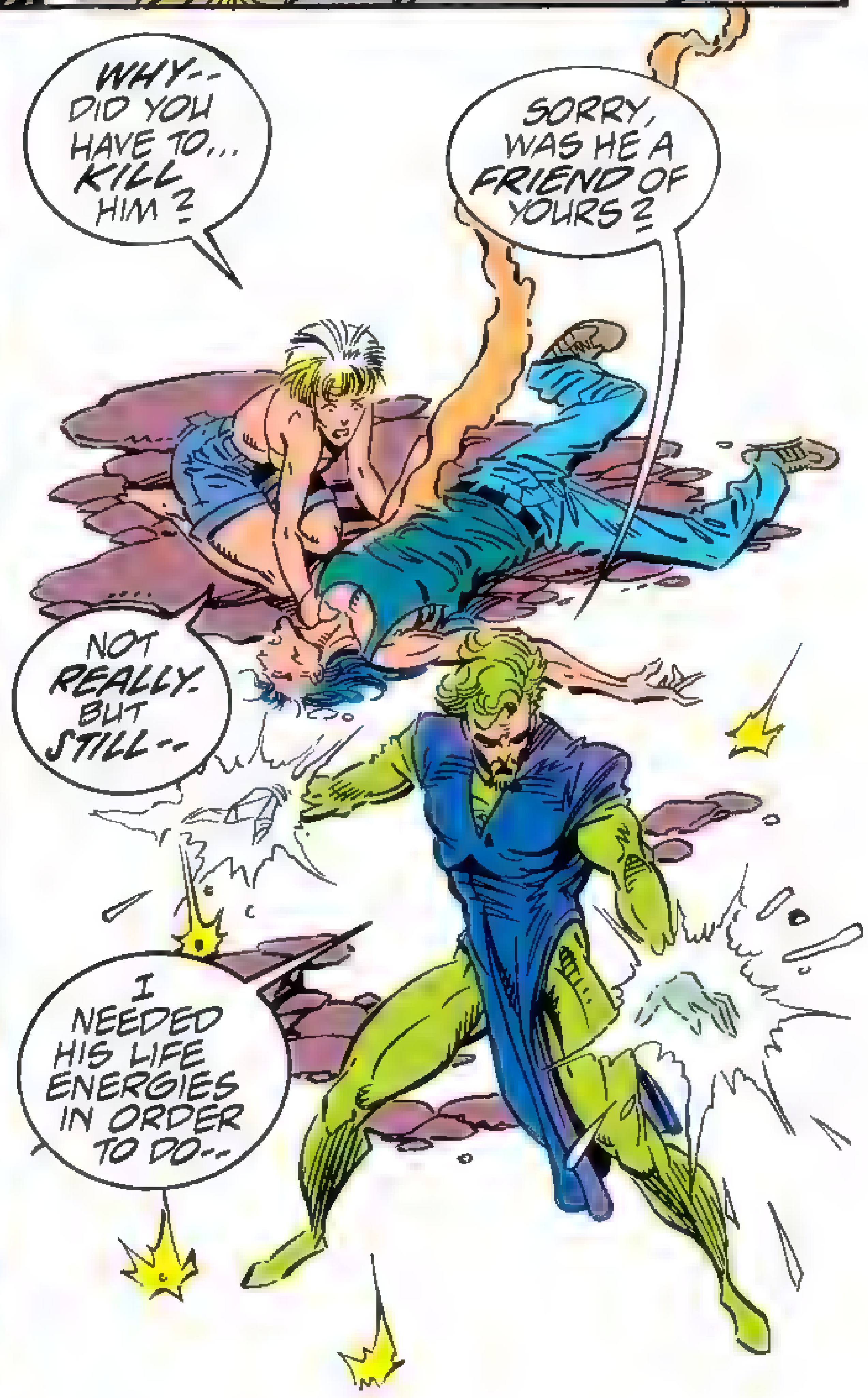

-URRMPH!-
THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT *SIPHONING* THE *LIFE ESSENCE* OF A FLATSCAN--
--A HUMAN--
--THAT *ALWAYS* LEAVES SUCH AN UNPLEASANT *AFTERTASTE*.
NECESSARY EVIL, I SUPPOSE. UNLIKE THE FUTURE WHERE I WAS BORN--
--MUTANTS AREN'T EASY ACCESS. WHETHER IT'S THE *X-MEN*, THE *BROTHERHOOD OF EVIL MUTANTS*, THE *ACOLYTES*...
...*MOST* OF THEM ARE ACCOUNTED FOR IN *ONE* GROUP OR THE OTHER.
ALL THE MORE REASON I NEED MY *STOOGE* HERE--TO INSURE I MAKE THE *MOST* OF THE LIFE ENERGIES I *DO* MANAGE TO SIPHON.
DID I SAY "NEED"?
MORE THAN REASON ENOUGH TO WANT HIM DEAD IN THE *FIRST* PLACE.

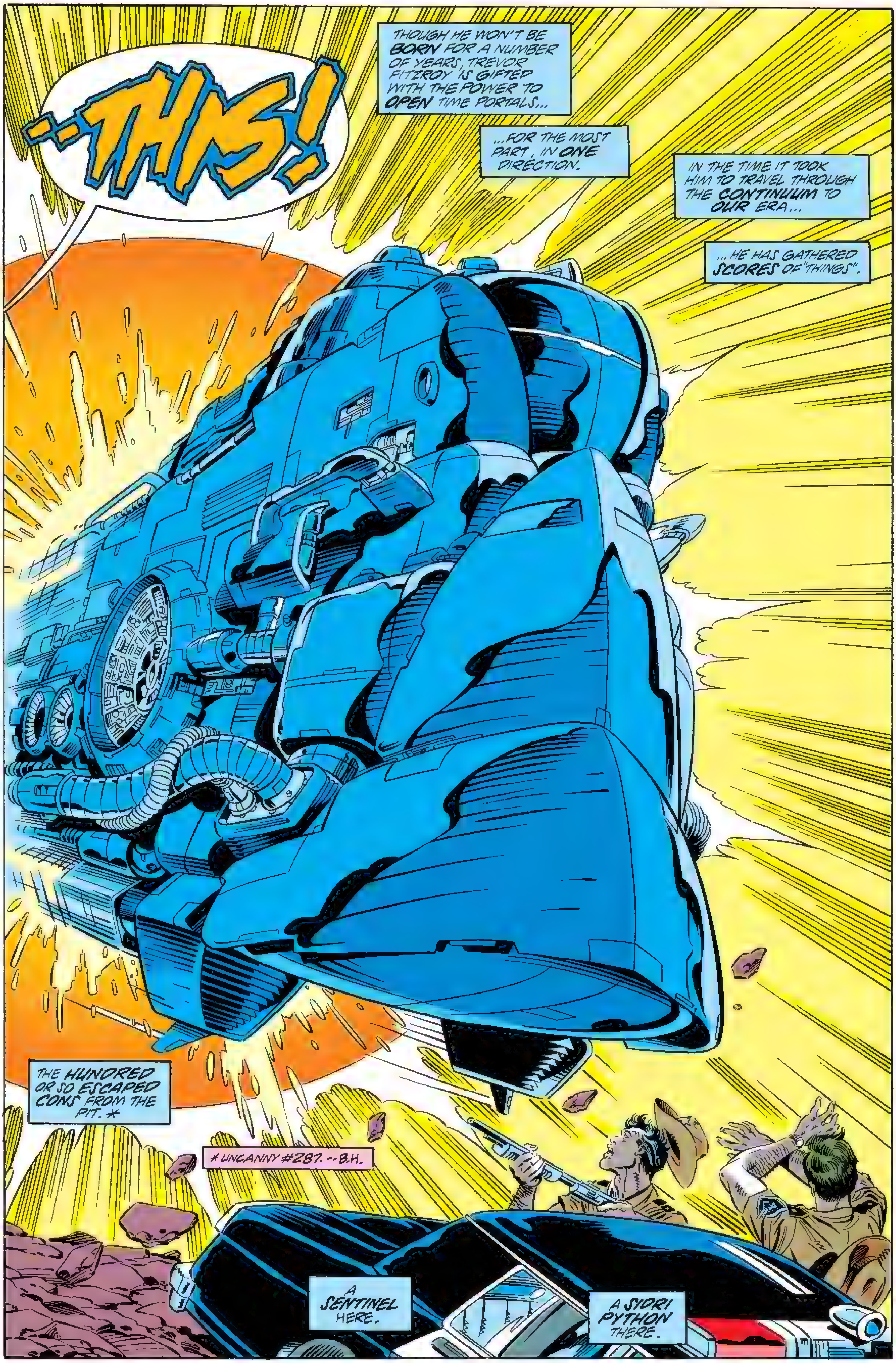

...
...WHA...
...WHAT'S HAPPENING TO ME?
WELCOME BACK TO THE LAND OF THE LIVING, BANTAM.
HERE'S HOPING YOU DON'T MAKE THE SAME MISTAKES AS LAST TIME.
MY APOLOGIES, LORD FITZROY. IT WAS FOOLISH OF ME TO QUESTION YOU IN FRONT OF THE OTHERS!
ER, AT ALL...
...IT WAS FOOLISH OF ME TO QUESTION YOU AT ALL!
EVER.
PLEASE, FORGIVE ME.
FORGIVENESS IS NOT AN ISSUE.
I INFUSED YOU WITH THE LIFE FORCE OF ANOTHER--
--GRANTING YOU THE MOBILITY YOU'D BEEN SO LONG DENIED--
--BECAUSE WE HAVE MUTUAL NEEDS
YOUR MUTANT TRANS-TEMPORAL AWARENESS IS CAPABLE OF MONITORING MY SELF-GENERATED TIME PORTALS.
AND YOU, MY LORD?
WHAT NEED DO YOU FILL IN MY LIFE?
YOUR NEED TO KEEP BREATHING.
NOW, THEN, BANTAM-- TO WORK!

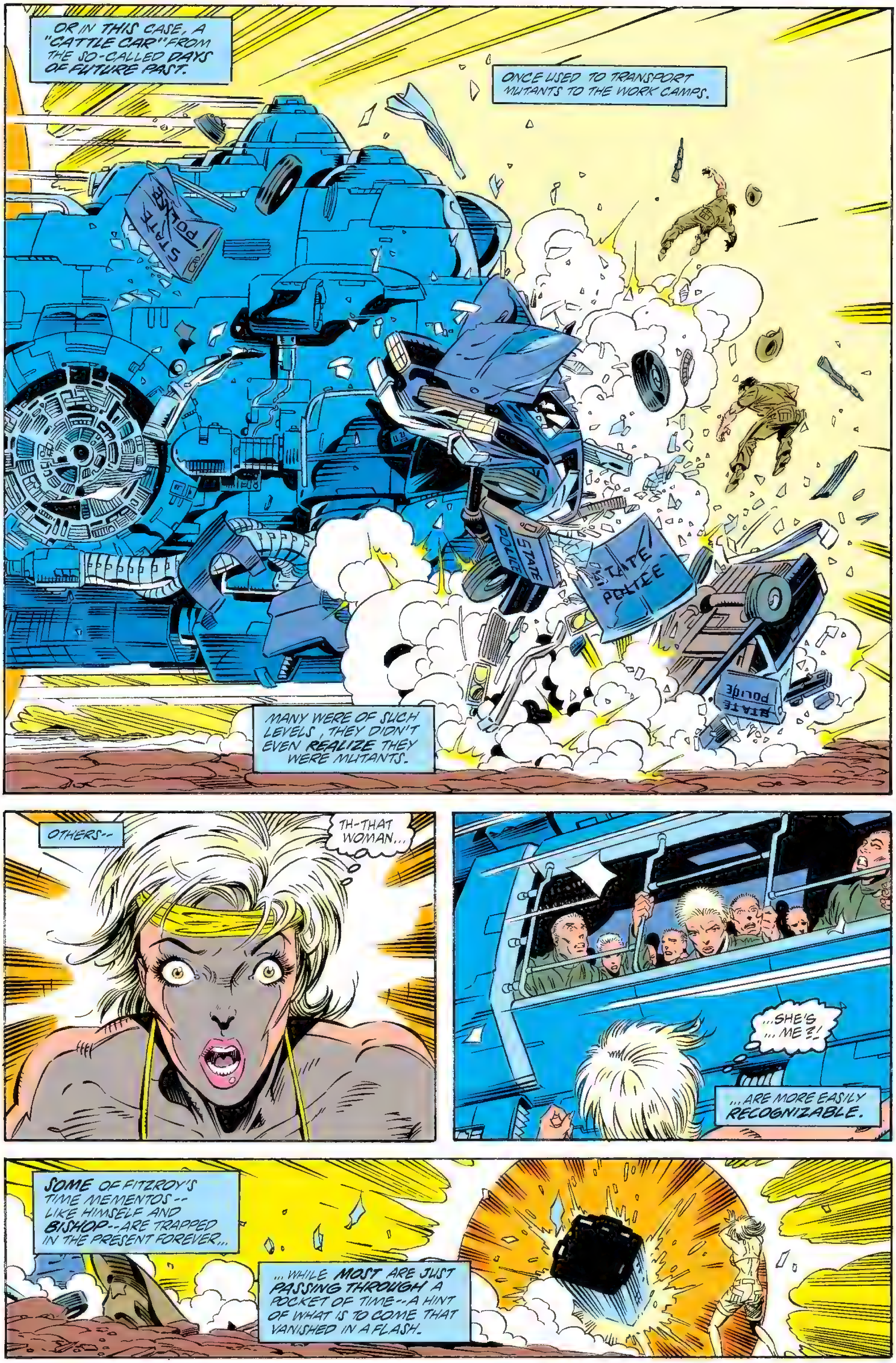

ELSEWHERE...
...A NORMALLY DESERTED STRIP OF US 1 IN NEW MEXICO--
--FINDS ITSELF DESERTED NO LONGER.
YOU SWORE TO ME YOU WERE A MUTANT, SIENA--
--IT'S THE ONLY REASON I AGREED TO GO ALONG WITH YOUR CRAZY PLAN!
SHUT UP, WALLACE!
I CAN'T THINK!
YOU DON'T HAVE TO THINK, GIRL--
--JUST USE YOUR MUTANT POWER TO GET US OUT OF THIS MESS!
YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND--
--I'D ONLY MAKE THINGS WORSE!
WORSE?!
WE'RE ALREADY SURROUNDED BY HALF THE STATE POLICE IN NEW MEXICO--
--AND NONE OF THEM PARTICULARLY INTERESTED IN WHETHER WE SURRENDER OR NOT!
WE HAVE NO TRANSPORTATION...
...AND NO SUPPLIES.
STATE POLICE
STATE POLICE
EVEN IF, AS YOU SAID, YOU'VE ONLY USED YOUR POWERS TWICE BEFORE...
...WHAT COULD YOU POSSIBLY DO THAT WOULD MAKE...
...THINGS...
...WORSE?
I HAVE FOUND THEM, M'LORD!
IT'S TOO MUCH TO HOPE THAT THIS IS YOUR POWER?
NOT...
...THAT I'M AWARE OF.

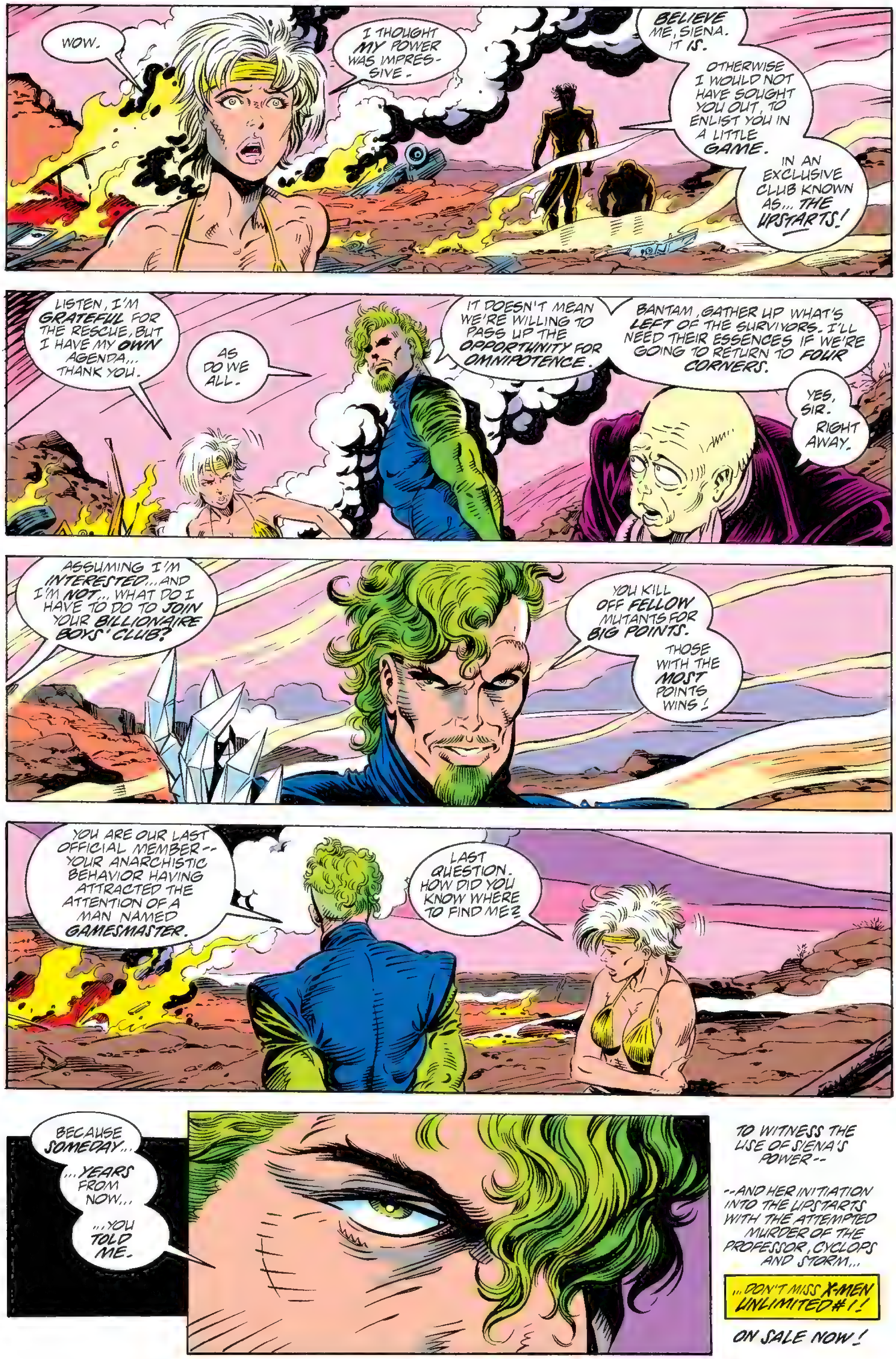

MS. SIENA BLAZE.
AND HER CONSORT DU JOUR, WALLACE BENTON.
IT IS WITH GREAT HONOR THAT YOU STAND BEFORE LORD TREVOR FITZROY.
HI.
HI YOURSELF!


LOOK, THIS IS GETTING TOO WEIRD FOR ME. I'M NOT A BIG FAN OF MUTANTS... I HOOKED UP WITH SIENA HERE BECAUSE SHE HAS SUCH A NICE
NO ONE LIKES A SEXIST, WALLACE.
URK?!

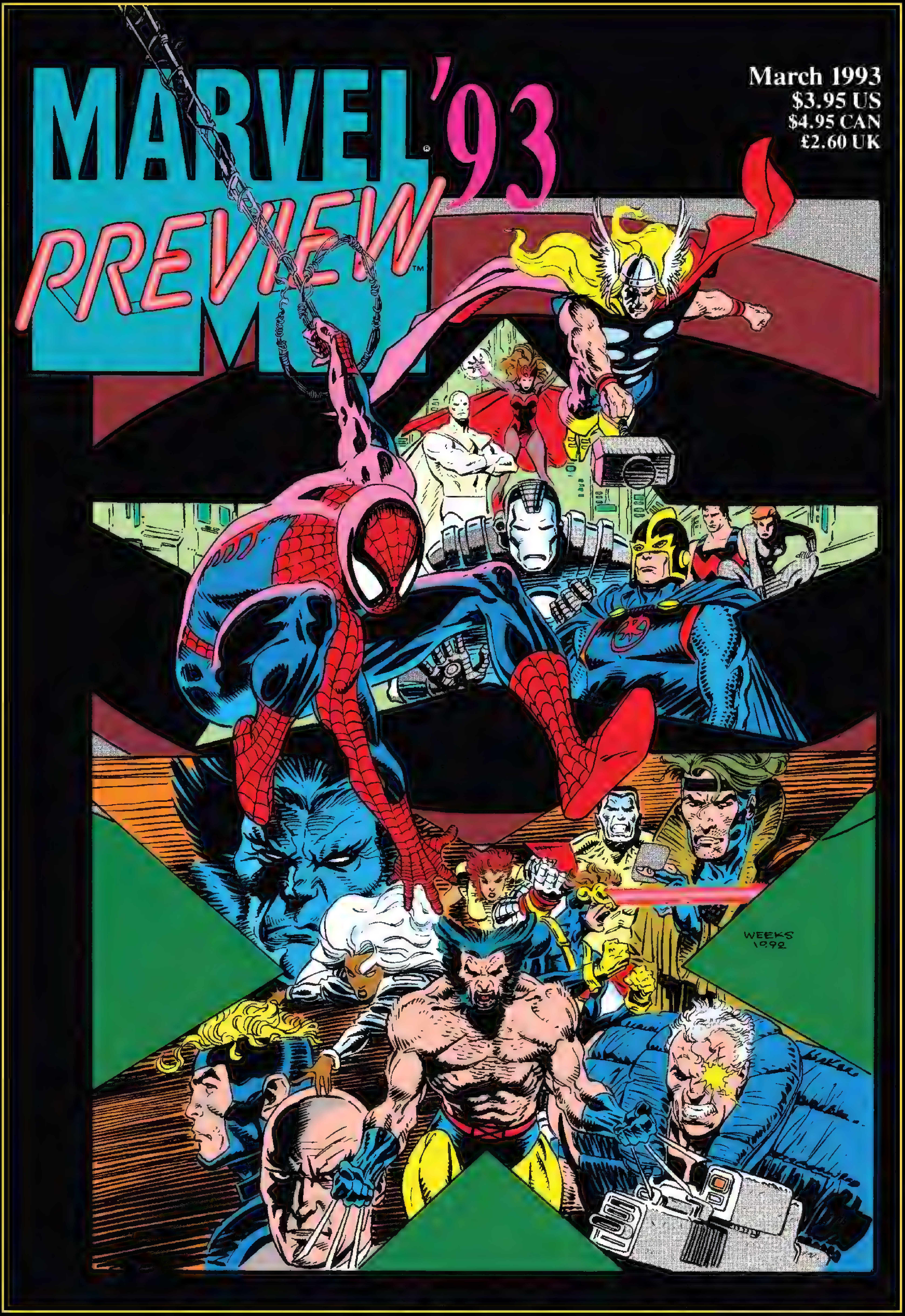

WHY-- DID YOU HAVE TO... KILL HIM?
SORRY, WAS HE A FRIEND OF YOURS?
NOT REALLY. BUT STILL--
I NEEDED HIS LIFE ENERGIES IN ORDER TO DO--


--THIS!
THOUGH HE WON'T BE BORN FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS, TREVOR FITZROY IS GIFTED WITH THE POWER TO OPEN TIME PORTALS...
...FOR THE MOST PART, IN ONE DIRECTION.
IN THE TIME IT TOOK HIM TO TRAVEL THROUGH THE CONTINUUM TO OUR ERA...
...HE HAS GATHERED SCORES OF "THINGS".
THE HUNDRED OR SO ESCAPED CONS FROM THE PIT.*
*UNCANNY #287. --B.H.
A SENTINEL HERE.
A SIDRI PYTHON THERE.


OR IN THIS CASE, A "CATTLE CAR" FROM THE SO-CALLED DAYS OF FUTURE PAST.
ONCE USED TO TRANSPORT MUTANTS TO THE WORK CAMPS.
STATE POLICE
STATE POLICE
STATE POLICE
STATE POLICE
MANY WERE OF SUCH LEVELS, THEY DIDN'T EVEN REALIZE THEY WERE MUTANTS.
OTHERS--
TH-THAT WOMAN...
...SHE'S ...ME?!
...ARE MORE EASILY RECOGNIZABLE.
SOME OF FITZROY'S TIME MEMENTOS -- LIKE HIMSELF AND BISHOP--ARE TRAPPED IN THE PRESENT FOREVER...
...WHILE MOST ARE JUST PASSING THROUGH A POCKET OF TIME--A HINT OF WHAT IS TO COME THAT VANISHED IN A FLASH.


WOW.
I THOUGHT MY POWER WAS IMPRESSIVE.
BELIEVE ME, SIENA. IT IS.
OTHERWISE I WOULD NOT HAVE SOUGHT YOU OUT, TO ENLIST YOU IN A LITTLE GAME.
IN AN EXCLUSIVE CLUB KNOWN AS... THE UPSTARTS!
LISTEN, I'M GRATEFUL FOR THE RESCUE, BUT I HAVE MY OWN AGENDA... THANK YOU.
AS DO WE ALL.
IT DOESN'T MEAN WE'RE WILLING TO PASS UP THE OPPORTUNITY FOR OMNIPOTENCE.
BANTAM, GATHER UP WHAT'S LEFT OF THE SURVIVORS. I'LL NEED THEIR ESSENCES IF WE'RE GOING TO RETURN TO FOUR CORNERS.
YES, SIR. RIGHT AWAY.
ASSUMING I'M INTERESTED... AND I'M NOT... WHAT DO I HAVE TO DO TO JOIN YOUR BILLIONAIRE BOYS' CLUB?
YOU KILL OFF FELLOW MUTANTS FOR BIG POINTS.
THOSE WITH THE MOST POINTS WINS!
YOU ARE OUR LAST OFFICIAL MEMBER-- YOUR ANARCHISTIC BEHAVIOR HAVING ATTRACTED THE ATTENTION OF A MAN NAMED GAMESMASTER.
LAST QUESTION. HOW DID YOU KNOW WHERE TO FIND ME?
BECAUSE SOMEDAY...
...YEARS FROM NOW...
...YOU TOLD ME.
TO WITNESS THE USE OF SIENA'S POWER--
--AND HER INITIATION INTO THE UPSTARTS WITH THE ATTEMPTED MURDER OF THE PROFESSOR, CYCLOPS AND STORM...
...DON'T MISS X-MEN UNLIMITED #1!
ON SALE NOW!

BAIR
1992


MARVEL '93
PREVIEW
March 1993
$3.95 US
$4.95 CAN
£2.60 UK
WEEKS 1992

AS THE X-MEN'S 30TH ANNIVERSARY IN SUMMER 1993 APPROACHED, *MARVEL PREVIEW '93* AND *MARVEL AGE #122* (BOTH MARCH 1993) PUBLISHED ARTICLES TEASING THE UPCOMING STORYLINES IN ALL THE X-TITLES.

MARVEL PREVIEW '93 COVER BY LEE WEEKS & RENÉE WITTERSTAETTER

MARVEL®
Age
122
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
MARCH 1993
$1.00 US
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X-MEN®
ANNIVERSARY
QUESADA -1992- P.C.R.

MARVEL AGE #122 COVER BY JOE QUESADA, P. CRAIG RUSSELL & JOE CAPONSACCO

They're a very rough and tumble group.

They are feared, they are praised. They are hunted, they are heroes. For three decades their kind has caused fear and loathing, and love and praise. Some say that "their kind" is the next rung on the evolutionary ladder. "Homo Superior," "mutie," and "genetically challenged" are all terms used to describe them. They are both heroes and outlaws, some operating outside the law, others sanctioned by it, and still others on the government's "Most Wanted" list.

"They," of course, are the X-Men and the rest of Marvel's mutant population. Over the past 30 years, these characters have risen from a group of second-string heroes to become one of the driving forces of the Marvel Universe. Still, all that has gone before serves as but a prelude for challenges yet to come. As 1992 drew to a close, the writers and editors of the X-books gathered together to plot out the storylines that will carry the various X-teams towards August 1993 — their anniversary month — when the events of their 30th anniversary promise to explode right off the comic book pages. This preview covers those lead-in events, with additional details related in the monthly **MARVEL AGE**.

Sparks fly as two different triangles blossom. . .

CABLE

The premiere issue of this ongoing monthly series starring X-Force's original commander-in-chief hits the stands in March, and — since it's written by **X-FORCE** scribe, Fabian Nicieza, it will have close ties with that series. Fabian revealed that the book will feature hard-hitting, volatile action, with the requisite amount of intrigue **X-FORCE** fans expect.

Cable sees the world as getting grimmer, and himself as the only hope for mutantkind. Not one to sit on the sidelines, he throws himself into the forefront of the fight for mutant rights. Unfortunately, the time traveler from the future is stuck in our time and thrown into conflict with the current Weapon X, Kane. Kane is searching for a cure for Hammer, who was struck down at the close of the "X-Cutioner's Song." **SHIELD** Agent George Washington Bridge, a regular in the new series, will re-form Six Pack, Cable's pre-X-Force team, and will use them to hunt down the mutant leader.

Being a megalomaniac, Cable feels that he is the only person capable of leading mutantkind into the 21st century. He is consequently determined not to let any of the other mutant leaders take up the mantle of spokesperson of the mutant population. Naturally, his bid to become the sole mutant leader will find him at odds with previous mutant lords, including Stryfe, Apocalypse, and Professor Charles Xavier, as well as the Acolytes of the Mage of Magnetism.

EXCALIBUR

According to Editor Terry Kavanagh, EXCALIBUR, while technically part of the X-verse, is seeking to establish itself as its own book. "**EXCALIBUR** has a different flavor than the rest of the X-Men books, so we will be dealing with the anniversary only in a peripheral sort of way," Terry said.

Although no specific tie-in to the 30th anniversary will actually occur in the title, there are tentative plans for a storyline dealing with Rachel and Cable. Specific details of the plot weren't ironed out as this article was written, but current plans call for Phoenix to lead Excalibur on a two-issue expedition into the "future" she left behind. This "return to the future" story will probably involve Cable, and will further define his and Rachel's relationships with Scott and Jean. (Rachel is an alternate-future daughter of Scott Summers and Jean Grey, and Cable is generally presumed to be the son of Scott and Madelyn Pryor — who was a clone of Jean — thus making Rachel and Cable step-siblings.)

There are also plans afoot to reveal many of the secrets behind Nightcrawler, *including* the truth of his relationship with Mystique, former leader of Freedom Force!

THE UNCANNY X-MEN

The year opens on the heels of the "X-Cutioner's Song" and the world in which the X-Men and their fellow mutants lives have become increasingly grim as they find they must deal with the legacy (and form) of Stryfe's retribution. Moria Mactaggert returns to the fold with disturbing news about Stryfe's "gift" to the world, information that not only bodes ill for the team, but galvanizes them into action. According to writer Scott Lobdell, the Professor will take a more active role with the team as he attempts to pull together the various mutant factions.

As if the X-Men didn't have enough to worry about, Magneto's Acolytes (last seen in **X-MEN #3**), will return as they attempt their mad quest to clean up the human genetic pool. Unwilling to simply wait for the next move, the X-Men will take the fight to the Acolytes by traveling to Europe (in the double-sized issue #300) to attack them on their home ground. As the hostility between the two groups builds, Professor X begins to suspect the circumstances of Magneto's death.

During the course of the year, Scott Lobdell will take the team back to their roots. "There are too many dark, depressing characters in comics," Scott said. "I've always felt that the X-Men were righteous and noble characters who were forever hopeful and optimistic about the future of the world, no matter how grim and dark things got." He wants to return the group to the team that, ". . .is always fighting to protect a world that hates and fears them."

Fans should keep a lookout for an 80 page annual due in the first half of the year. The annual will introduce a new villain and a new group of young mutants that Scott described as the "new" New Mutants. This group is tentatively called Generation X.

WOLVERINE

Due to the increased mutant activity, Professor X begins to fear that his old friend and nemesis Magneto is still alive, so he sends Wolverine and Rogue to investigate Magnus's last-known Earth-side base in the Savage Land. Upon arriving in Ka-Zar's domain, they don't discover the master of magnetism, but they *do* determine dire ramifications of Zaladane's murder.

As can be expected, the gritty feel of this title, under the tutelage of writer Larry Hama, will continue as Wolverine comes to grips with the after-effects of the X-Cutioner's Song, and the retribution of Strife's final actions begins to take shape and causes untold amounts of grief for mutants and non-mutants alike.

WOLVERINE #75 will be an over-sized issue that will be a part of a round-robin series of non-continued stories running throughout the X-books. Editor Bob Harras stated that these stories will not be a standard crossover, but will be self-contained, and have common plot threads that will serve as a countdown to the X-Men's anniversary.

X-FACTOR

X-Factor, the only group of mutants officially sponsored by the U.S. Government, returns to Genosha to discover a new genengineer picking up in Moreau's stead. To make matters worse, the X-Patriots (the mutant outcasts from Genosha) are becoming more of a threat. Editor Kelly Corvese said that X-Factor will add a new member to its ranks.

A new villain, Enigma, is introduced in March's **X-FACTOR ANNUAL**. Group Editor Bob Harras stated that this year's X-annuals will be 80 pages long, and will feature non-continued stories coupled with back-up features (see "Annuals" feature). Thus, in addition to the Enigma story, the **X-FACTOR ANNUAL** will feature a Mr. Sinister tale, and will re-present a classic tale showcasing Polaris and Havoc.

Kelly revealed that, while **X-FACTOR** has been a "witty, light-hearted" X-title, writer Peter David and artist Joe Quesada will be giving the group a harder edge in the coming months. Readers will still thrill to their character-driven stories, but the comedic element will be toned down a notch or two. With the return to Genosha, Peter will delve deeper into the triangle growing around Wolfsbane, Havoc, and Polaris. "We'll be fleshing out why Rahne has such an attachment to Alex," Kelly said.

As hints abound as to the whereabouts of Magneto, Quicksilver begins to grow agitated, worrying about how his father's reappearance (if he is alive) could affect Pietro's daughter, Luna, who is, of course, Magneto's Inhuman grandchild. As his stress builds, and the demands of his involvement with X-Factor continue, Quicksilver suffers a stroke.

X-FORCE

With Cable gone, X-Force must forge their own way in the world. According to scribe Fabian Nicieza, X-Force is not only a much younger group than the X-Men, but has a harder edge. Editor Bob Harras agreed. "They're a very rough and tumble group," he said. X-Force will be combining parts of the training they received from all their teachers

. . ."huge, epic stories that focus on small, intense moments in the lives of the X-Men."

This foe, Soul Skinner, as described by Fabian, is *pure* evil.

(Professor X, Magneto, and Cable) to determine how they fit in to the overall scheme of things.

As the nominal leader of X-Force, Cannonball will become more withdrawn as he begins to test the limits of his newly discovered status as an immortal. Hand-in-hand with this knowledge comes the realization that his teammates aren't immortal, and so he begins to take more of the risks, which will force him to become even more aloof.

Sparks fly as two different triangles blossom, one between Syrin, Shatterstar, and Warpath, and the other between Boom Boom, Rictor, and Sam. Feral will begin to adopt a new attitude as she realizes that, without Cable, her link to the group has become more tenuous. Fabian said that he is going to turn her into the character that fans will hate to love. "I'm going to do a real number on her, and make her more sympathetic." The real Domino attempts to hook up Cable's former charges (tough to do since she's never met the team), and then, to really confuse everyone, Vanessa returns.

X-MEN

Much to everyone's surprise, the most unexpected X-Men of all (no, not Mimic), shows up on the doorstep. At the same time, Hank (Beast) McCoy suffers a serious crisis of faith in his scientific abilities when an unexplained virus begins to run rampant through the world's mutant population. He feels that he has spent so much of his life punching out bad guys and cracking jokes that he is outdated in his own field and thus of no help to those who need him most. This feeling of utter helplessness is amplified because he's always seen himself as the oldest, most mature of the original X-Men, and considered himself to be a world-class bio-geneticist, yet now there is a worldwide genetic crisis occurring that he can do nothing to prevent.

The Professor sends the Blue Team into the heart of Russia on a special mission where Colossus comes to terms with his dual heritage (that of a Russian-born mutant) and his role with the team. Back in his mother country, he discovers that the government is watching his little sister, Illyana, because she used to have magical powers and run with the New Mutants. This all weighs heavily on him, particularly since he hasn't come to grips with his brother's suicide.

As if the X-Men didn't have enough foes, a new villain will be introduced. This foe, Soul Skinner, as described by Fabian, is *pure* evil. His powers attack people from within, utilizing their own memories against them, quite literally raping their minds, as he shreds them from the inside out.

...[CABLE] will feature hard-hitting, volatile action,

While in Russia the team runs across the Exiles (introduced in last year's **SOVIET SUPER SOLDIERS** special). This group of Russian mutant dissidents includes former Soviet Super Soldier, Darkstar. Her presence will especially affect Iceman, who once shared membership with her (and Warren) in the U.S.-based Champions. Even though their encounter will be fleetingly brief, Bobby wonders about his own role in the X-Men, as well as his feelings for his girlfriend, Opal. There will be some romantic intrigue as the relationship between Rogue and Gambit begins to deepen.

X-MEN ADVENTURES

Editor Kelly Corvese revealed that working on this book is different then the other X-books because it's not bound by 30 years of continuity. The writers of the TV show have taken the X-Men in some very different and interesting directions. The initial stories of '93 will deal with how the X-Men meet Callisto (issue #5), plus an all-out slugfest when Wolverine and Sabretooth collide tooth and nail in issue #6.

Based on the Fox-TV animated show, this title continues to adapt the initial 13 episodes of the TV series. According to Kelly, if the comic book proved as popular as the first few episodes of the Saturday-morning cartoon, it would continue even if the series was somehow canceled. Kelly stated that fans shouldn't discount this series even though the stories aren't related to the "real" X-Men's adventures. "If the fans want it, I might ask Ralph [Macchio] to write some brand new stories, and maybe we can get the TV show to adapt *them*," he said laughingly.

X-MEN UNLIMITED

New to the line-up of X-titles, this 64-page book will offer new stories that take a closer look at the lives of groups of X-Men, and how they interrelate under different circumstances. The first issue features a lead story by Scott Lobdell and Chris Bachalo that tosses Professor Xavier, Storm, and Cyclops together in a crisis situation in Antarctica. According to Scott, the Blackbird has crash landed in the Antarctic during a raging blizzard. Storm is rendered unconscious in the crash, and the Professor realizes that, for all their powers, they are helpless against the elements. Complicating matters, they are pursued by Siena Blaze, from the rogue mutant group the Upstarts.

Editor Kelly Corvese said that **X-MEN UNLIMITED** will usually contain 2-3 stories featuring "hard-core characterization, although some issues will have one complete storyline." Scott Lobdell stated that the tales will be, "huge, epic stories that focus on small, intense moments in the lives of the X-Men." Future adventures include a team up of Forge, Rogue, and Mystique, plus a story about the death of Iceman's mother. Given the quarterly nature of this series, all storylines will be self-contained.

X-MEN: BEYOND THE BOOKS

Bob Harras revealed that the X-Men's 30th anniversary will feature more oversized special issues than you can shake a stick at. He stated that each of the X-books will deliver an oversized issue that will address poignant issues in the lives of each team, and will serve as a countdown to the anniversary. Included in these larger-than-life extravaganzas will be the **UNCANNY X-MEN #300, X-FORCE #25, X-MEN #25, and WOLVERINE #75.**

These books will be 48-page comics featuring special enhancements (either embossed figures, foil covers, or holograms), and will be priced at $2.95 (save for **WOLVERINE**, priced at $3.50). **UNCANNY X-MEN #304** (August) is the actual celebration of the X-Men's anniversary, plus the culmination of all story lines. This issue will be a $3.95, 64-page giant featuring a special cover enhancement. These stories will either be self-contained or final chapters, and will all explode with action and answers to the year-long plotlines. Each will also offer a brief synopsis so that casual readers can follow the stories.

In addition to the ongoing titles, there will be a number of limited series and specials, including **DEADPOOL** by Fabian and newcomer Joe Madureira, and **SABRETOOTH.** Since Bob Harras is currently writing **AVENGERS** — who are celebrating their 30th anniversary — look for an **X-MEN/AVENGERS** crossover. Several items will be released throughout the year relating to the anniversary. George White, a spokesman for Skybox mentioned a second 100-card set of trading cards; Sven Larsen, head of Marvel's Marketing Department, revealed other items including a new convention pin, posters, and a new line of action figures slated for the second half of the year. "We are going to be building up the excitement all year, much like we did last year with Spider-Man's anniversary," he said.

As Marvel's mutant family passes its 30-year mark, the writers and editors are playing fast and loose with the legend, and readers are warned that nothing is as stable as one might think. How far can they go? How high is up? Bob Harras spends his days firing up his writers and artists, and always demanding their best work. Bob wants to effect permanent and long-lasting changes in the lives of Marvel's mutant population, and went so far as to call 1993, "The year of the X."

Quicksilver suffers a stroke.

EPILOGUE: A PERSONAL VIEW

When Group Editor Bob Harras began his discussion of the X-Men's anniversary, he expounded on why mutants are feared because of their power, while other super heroes aren't. "It's because their power is inborn," Bob stated. Normal people look on mutants in much the same way that people look at the very wealthy, he added. If someone is a self-made millionaire, it's okay, because they've worked hard for it with their own abilities. However, if someone is wealthy because their money is inherited, they are often derided by the general public.

That a person's genetic coding can "turn" on them and cause them to grow wings, ice up, or shoot force bolts from their eyes, frightens people. Further, that this type of "mishap" could occur in someone's own offspring quite simply scares the pants off most folks. As the events of 1993 alter both the mutant and non-mutant population, mutants will become even more feared and despised. Only time will tell the ultimate effect of these changes, or how far-reaching they will become.

Robert J. Sodaro is a full-time freelance writer and part-time working philosopher. He became a writer when he was bitten by a radioactive Robert A. Heinlein novel; being a philosopher is his mutant ability. His first MARVEL AGE article appeared way back in issue #8, with his recent work including articles on the Toy Biz line of Marvel action figures (#116), and the X-Men's 30th anniversary (this issue.)

with the requisite amount of intrigue. . .

MUTANT

Now celebrating their 30th anniversary at Marvel, the X-MEN sport a whole line of assorted spin-off titles. Each has its own lineup, its own flavor, its own writer. MARVEL AGE recently sat down with the three major mutant scribes—Peter "X-FACTOR" David, Scott "UNCANNY X-MEN" Lobdell, and Fabian "X-FORCE & X-MEN" Nicieza—to talk with them about the past and future of the X-Men Universe. Keep in mind that, in addition to being X-writers, Scott is a stand-up comedian, Fabian edits REN & STIMPY, and Peter, well, he's just nuts. Getting these guys to stay serious during a round-robin interview took all of our wits (and some serious editing).

MA: Let's talk about the future of the mutant titles. Where are each of your X-Books going? Fabian?

FN: The entire year of 1993 and much of 1994 is being defined by something that evolves out of the X-Cutioner's Song—but I still don't know how much we can reveal at the point this interview is going to come out. But we'll say that something is being introduced into the Marvel Universe which is going to cause us all to reinspect the aspects of the mutant books that made them so popular to begin with—the isolation, the prejudice, the themes of people trying to struggle to accomplish something in the world for the betterment of everyone while others are trying to put them down. And the **X-Men** are going to continue to explore that as the edges of Xavier's dream are getting frayed away. The individuals in **X-MEN** are going to be enduring a lot to determine why they're continuing this fight, when they're obviously losing.

The random element—the "x-factor," as it were—that gets introduced into the books is going to cause them to seriously question what's going on, and it also threatens each and every one of their lives. We're going to get some interesting character interaction between the different group members, development of the relationship between Rogue and Gambit. We're also going to introduce a wild card into the team, a new member who will be introduced in the fall, who is a long-established Marvel mutant character. And when he comes into the mix, it's going to be interesting because he's being forced down their throats in a way by Xavier, who wants to help this man who's asking for help. The X-Men aren't too happy about it, because he is a real ♂@#[head.

That's the direction that **X-MEN** is going in...I'm sure there'll be lots of hittin' and slappin', too, for those kids out there. *(Laughter)* The heck with all this thematic crap, let's talk about who slaps who.

In **X-FORCE**, we're going to try something exciting and new: we're going to try to make them three-dimensional characters. What we have planned for that is a real heavy look at the interaction between the team members, without Cable for the time being. Cable will come back into the book on a semi-regular basis later on in the year, but we're going to really be concentrating on the teenage characters themselves, and how they deal with being on their own and how they deal with their newly-developing agenda for how to handle things. I mean, we're talking about young people who have been trained by Xavier, Magneto and Cable. So they have very interesting influences behind their methodology and how they view the world.

We're going to continue to go into the themes that Rob [Liefeld] and I had talked about originally, which is children at war, and how they operate when they're fighting a war—because that's what they perceive they're doing. So they're going to have literally and figuratively a bunker mentality, because their base of operations is going to be a bunker—

PD: Stifle, Edith.

FN: *(Laughter)* They're literally carving a bunker out of the remains of Warpath's Indian reservation. It's a much more heavily action-oriented book that's driven by various forces, although seemingly happening at the same time and place and rarely ever explained. *(Laughter)* And they will continue to do so. Six-Pack will be re-forming, Deadpool will be coming back, the Externals will be involved in the book...that covers us through the summer of this year. The Mutant Liberation Front will be forming under a new head, as a smaller, tighter unit; their agenda is much stronger and much more focused than it had been before,and we'll have a new mysterious leader for the MLF, who will not be Stryfe...or maybe *will* be Stryfe. We'll see.

MA: Peter, what about X-FACTOR?

PD: I think one of the difficulties is that, in **X-FACTOR**, I've been trying to make the book so different, that to a certain extent a number of fans have reacted to it in a negative way, essentially saying, "Gee, it's too different, I'm not sure if I like it or not."

Because I have such instituted such bizarre things as humor into the book—

FN: *(Gasps loudly)*

PD: —It's regarded purely as a "funny book," which is not what I intended in the first place. So I'm going to be endeavoring over the next year to strike something of a balance; to encourage the readers to take the characters and the situations that they're in more seriously, while at the same time try to make sure to maintain the tone and style that have made the book, to my mind, unique among the various mutant titles.

I'm going to be doing more exploration of the characters, making the readers realize that they have depth, they have their own criteria, they have their own agendas. Part of the problem is that I have not had the characters launch into lengthy soul-searching, soul-searing monologues about their various difficulties.

SL: Not that there's anything wrong with that.

FN: *(Laughter)* No, not that that's not been the *staple* of the books for God knows how long—

PD: Exactly! And thus, because I haven't been doing that, I think people are under the impression that the characters have no depth. So I am going to try and be a little bit less subtle in that respect by having the characters spell things out—at least once—so that the readers will know how the characters stand. From then on, I want to try and do more to play with them across aspects of the mu-

MOUTHPIECES

A quick peek inside the brains of the X-Men writers

tant universe with which the readers are more familiar.

For example, Genosha. They are going to be heading back to Genosha in tandem with this new group of characters, the X-Patriots, in a major storyline. It will answer some long-standing questions such as, what's the deal with Rahne and why is she acting the way she is? The Genosha storyline will also introduce a major new villain called Armageddon, who is going to be pulling together a lot of story threads, and helping give the entire book more of an underpinning and a feeling of its own back story.

I will also be introducing a new character who will be joining and should be shaking up the mix a good deal—very mysterious extradimensional-type character. The problem when you're introducing new characters is that I don't want to bring in someone from the future, because that's been done in the other X-Books—

SL: When was that?

FN: What future?

PD: *(Laughter)* I don't want to bring somebody in from space, so therefore I thought we'd try something *totally* different by having him come in from another dimension...what the heck.

FN: Longshot, Shatterstar...

SL: The Great Kazoo.

PD: What, from the Flintstones?

FN: After all this time in comics, if you're doing it, chances are it's been done before. That's the problem. It's a matter of how you do it that counts.

PD: Exactly. Because there will be things about [this new character] that I think will cause a good deal of debate among the readers. I want to try to add some mystery to the book, but a mystery that can be solved, instead of people just speculating wild theories—

FN: It's solvable now, isn't it, Scott?! *(To microphone)* Scott pointed at me, and he was referring to the Cable stuff, but it's solvable now, isn't it, folks?

PD: Not soluble, which a lot of people say means "dissolvable in water"...

FN: *(Laughter)* Sure, we don't want that. Don't put your comic in water, kids—

PD: That's true. **X-FACTOR** is soluble.

SL: Well, there are plastic bags so you can—

PD: But I am trying to strike the balance of introducing this mysterious new character—about whom people can actually take some educated guesses—while making the book as fun as possible.

FN: The readers love that, too; they love trying to guess things before we tell them. They love knowing things before the characters know them. One thing that Peter had, which was unfortunate for him and made it harder for him in a way, was that he was given a book with a lot of characters who had never been together before—

PD: And nobody cared about!

FN: —and he had to develop them. He's been starting from scratch, but it's not like an origin issue of a new character, because he still had to worry about all the back story, and all of these characters had a tremendous amount of back story. So it's been harder for him than it's been for Scott or myself. But it's just a matter of the readers just continuing to go on with it. And they are, I mean the book's doing really well.

PD: The other thing that I think is going to be tremendous is that (penciler) Joe Quesada is coming on the book. I think that the artists we've had up till now are brilliant stylists

—Larry Stroman, Jae Lee—absolutely brilliant artists, but their style isn't necessarily for everybody. I loved Larry's stuff, I loved Jae's stuff. But on the other hand, some people reacted the same way they react to Bill Sienkiewicz. They're people who do incredible stuff, but their style isn't necessarily for everyone. I think that Joe's style is going to be more accessible to more people.

FN: But it's still very stylized.

PD: Exactly, but the thing is, he's got such a knack for storytelling, and he brings so much of his own enthusiasm to the book. He keeps calling me up and saying, "What if we do it this way, what if we do it that way?" Which is also a pleasure, because I've had artists who come up with neat ideas, and then they just do them without telling me.

FN: Or they're afraid to talk to you about it, so they don't do them. And it might have been a really good idea, but they didn't communicate with you.

PD: I so encourage artists to call me, anytime day or night—

SL: Artists who you're working with.

FN: Preferably. *(Laughter)*

PD: The other aspect I want to explore with X-Factor is that they are a government group—and since we've just undergone a change in the administration, I figure that it might be fun to play off of that. As a result, I am writing to Bill Clinton, and asking what his official position on mutants...

FN: *(Laughter)*

PD: ...So that I can be sure to have a joke right in the book. He's so easy to write to; he's still in Arkansas, so it should be easy enough.

FN: *(Laughter)* Sure. This, of course, isn't going to get Peter on any FBI flyers or anything; they're not going to red-flag him in a computer, are they? *(Laughter)*

PD: I figure that the absolute worst thing that happens is that I never hear from them. But on the other hand—

FN: No, the absolute worst thing that can happen is that someone's across the street from you, taking photographs on a daily basis, that's the worst thing that can happen. *(Laughter)*

PD: Hey, as long as they get my good side. And I won't tell you which side that is...

One of the drawbacks of **X-FACTOR** is that we are so hysterically late on deadline, that issue #86 is on the stands right now, while issue #87 isn't finished being penciled yet. So I am able to have that kind of timeliness to it. Issue #88 will talk about Clinton's inauguration, and that'll be coming out in January, so that we are able to stay as *au courant* as possible.

The drawback is that it's giving the editors prematurely gray hair. The advantage is that if something happens in the news, I can either construct a story around it, or at least have the characters react to it. And since they're in that government setting, I figure why not take advantage of it?

The Genosha storyline will introduce a major new villain...
X

SL: Are we going to find out that Hillary and Val are good friends?

PD: Joe has been pleading with me to write in some actual people, such as Al Gore or something, because he says he does really good renderings of likenesses. So I'm tempted to have Al Gore be put in charge of it. Just as Bush put Quayle in charge of the space program—

SL: Gore would be the Mutant Czar.

PD: More or less. We'd just have Gore show up and give them his blessing, or say "We're going to be keeping a tighter rein on you, and we may have to cut your budget." It would be interesting if X-Factor's budget got cut in half.

FN: Yeah, that would be good, actually. They have to take coach flights; no more fancy "Corvette-jets." *(Laughter)*

PD: Well, they do take planes sometimes, but it would be interesting if, instead of taking these large private planes, they had to charter these little puddle-jumpers.

FN: Yeah, and they get stuck next to crying babies on flights—

PD: Oh, God! *(Laughter)* Naah, that's too silly.

FN: Yeah, we're not writing humor books anymore.

SL: That was the *old* new **X-FACTOR**, this is the *new* new **X-FACTOR**.

PD: But still as entertaining.

MA: And what about UNCANNY X-MEN, Scott?

SL: There's a fundamental difference

between **UNCANNY X-MEN** and **X-MEN** in that this year, everything that's going on in the mutant universe is going to polarize **UNCANNY X-MEN** and get them much more focused. Rather than stepping away and deciding that Professor Xavier's dream doesn't work, the Uncanny X-Men are going to realize that they are the caretakers of this dream, which is very viable. With the entire world falling apart around them, now more so than ever they need to be the upstanding mutants, the ones who have the code. You have **X-FORCE**, which is kind of renegade-oriented, and **X-FACTOR**, which is very government-oriented, and the UNCANNY X-MEN is going to be about focusing on the viable aspects of why the X-Men are still all together, rather than decided that they shouldn't be together.

MA: How is that going to progress in the near future?

SL: With the return of a major, major, major super-villain. There's an old saying that a hero is only as interesting as the villains he fights. With the return of this adversary, we're going to be redefining the characters and seeing how they respond. This will help the characters get back into focus, as well as their rationale for existing as a group. The book will continue to be character-driven.

MA: How closely do each of you pattern your current writing to past X-Men writing?

PD: My book is nothing like the previous **X-FACTOR**, because it's a totally different group, with a totally different setup. So all I'm trying to do is be consistent with myself and tell good stories.

SL: The characters I'm working on have been around the Marvel Universe for a long time. There's a lot there in those characters, and sometimes I think we could spend the next ten years just tying up holes and plot threads, and not have to create anything new—and we'd still have interesting stories to tell. But that's not going to happen.

I'm concentrating on pulling away from the great tapestry of X-Men history and trying to work with a smaller palette, and tell stories about the characters. What I'm trying to do, with respect to the history of the book is, with each issue, tell a complete story so that if a new reader comes on, they can still follow it, read the story and enjoy the story, without necessarily having to know about the 30 years prior to that.

FN: I look at the books as a real evolution from the very beginning. I think that Stan [Lee] and Jack [Kirby] set up all the themes that this book was about from the very first issue. And it carried through the book forever. Roy Thomas, when he handled it, he did the exact same thing; he further developed these themes of prejudice and isolation, accommodation, fighting vs. unity, and how to best achieve peace. It was always an allegory for prejudice and race relations in our times.

I think Chris [Claremont]—obviously because of the bulk of the run he had on the book, the duration of it—was able to really explore it in more mature ways than the books in the '60's or '70's did. But that's mostly just because every new generation of writers is able to explore these things a little more in-depth than the previous ones. I expect that whoever's writing the X-Men 15 or 20 years from now—because I guarantee it won't be me—they'll be carrying it on even more in depth than we are now. I believe that anybody writing anything with an "X" on it is completely indebted in many ways that those four gentlemen did...and Len Wein and Dave Cockrum are no slouches, either, considering that they re-created the team and re-conceived all the characters.

PD: Something that I really don't think they get enough credit for.

FN: Oh, they certainly don't get enough credit for it, but—

PD: I mean, Len Wein created Wolverine.

FN: —but you also look at it from the point of view of "Who did the most work on a character or on a book?" And Len and Dave didn't do that much work on these characters, when you come right down to it.

PD: Well, Dave did.

FN: Not even, when you consider he only drew about eight to ten issues, tops.

SL: That's true, but I think that the X-Men were fascinating enough in the first ten issues before John Byrne even got on the book.

FN: Oh, absolutely, there's no doubt. They were very fresh, they were very new [characters] when they started out—

PD: They took a book that, when it started out, was bi-monthly, and those two months between issues of **UNCANNY X-MEN** were the longest two months I, as a fan, had to live through.

FN: You're right, back then there was a real excitement about buying the books. I think we're trying to get that back right now. I think it might have been lost a little bit in the past few years.

SL: Because—?

FN: Because things weren't being resolved; some storylines and subplots were dragging on a little longer than they should have. This is a monthly medium; you don't have the luxury of stretching things out over three, four years. You don't have the luxury of developing a subplot and not picking it up again for six issues. You just can't do that. I think that comes as a result of not seeing the forest for the trees, of knowing how much you want to do—and wanting to do so *much* that you don't end up doing any of it, you don't end up focusing on any of the little things because there are so many little things you want to do.

MA: Because in the end, you only have 22 pages a month—

FN: Which isn't really all that much, when you come right down to it. All of us, I'm sure, would love to occasionally have 30 or so—I mean, the last chapter of the X-Cutioner's Song went to 25 pages...we could have easily gone to 30 or 35.

SL: And it still wouldn't have made any sense.

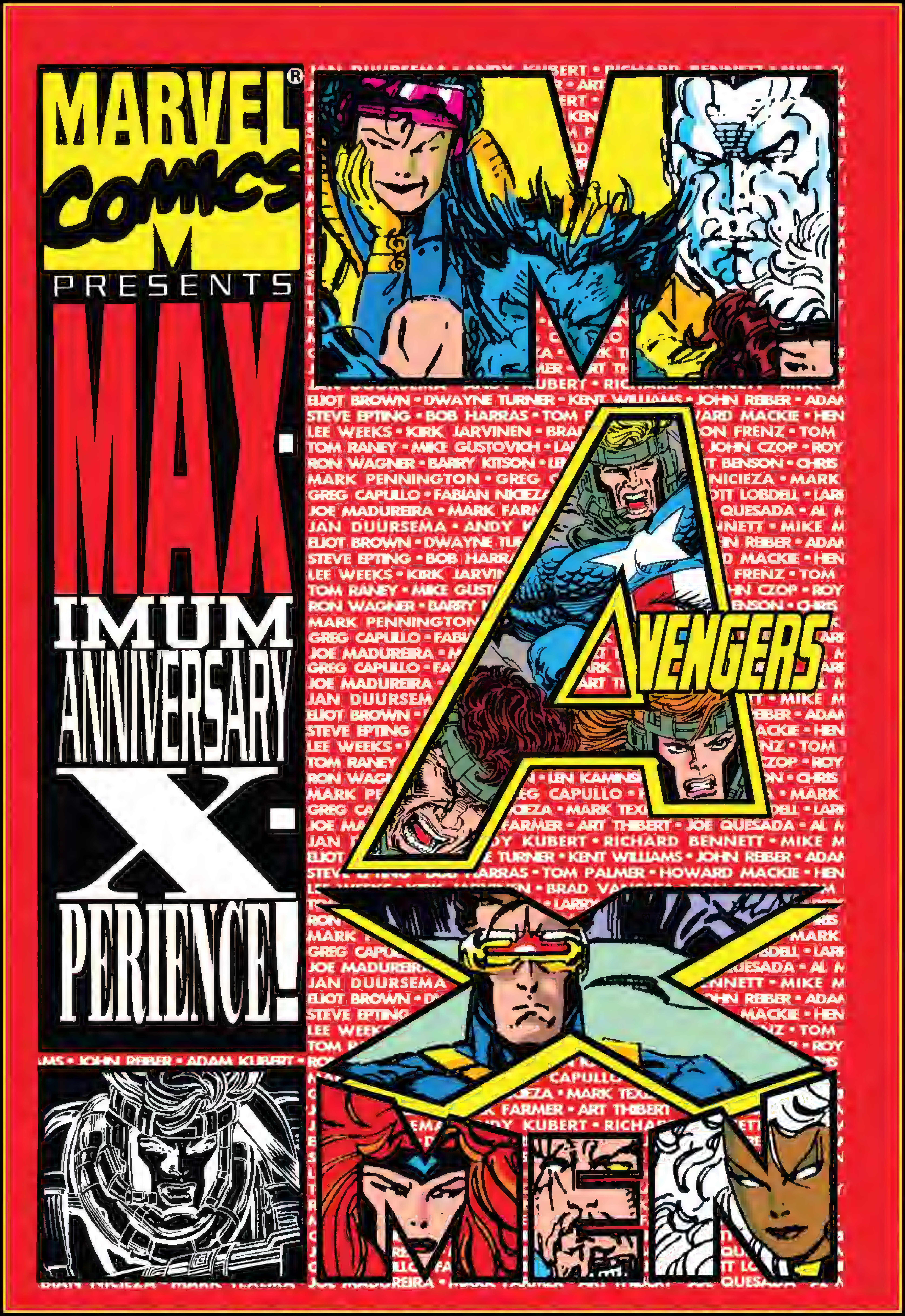
FN: *(Laughter)* Let him complain, let him whine...he's only Scott.

PD: And what the hell kind of name is Lobdell?

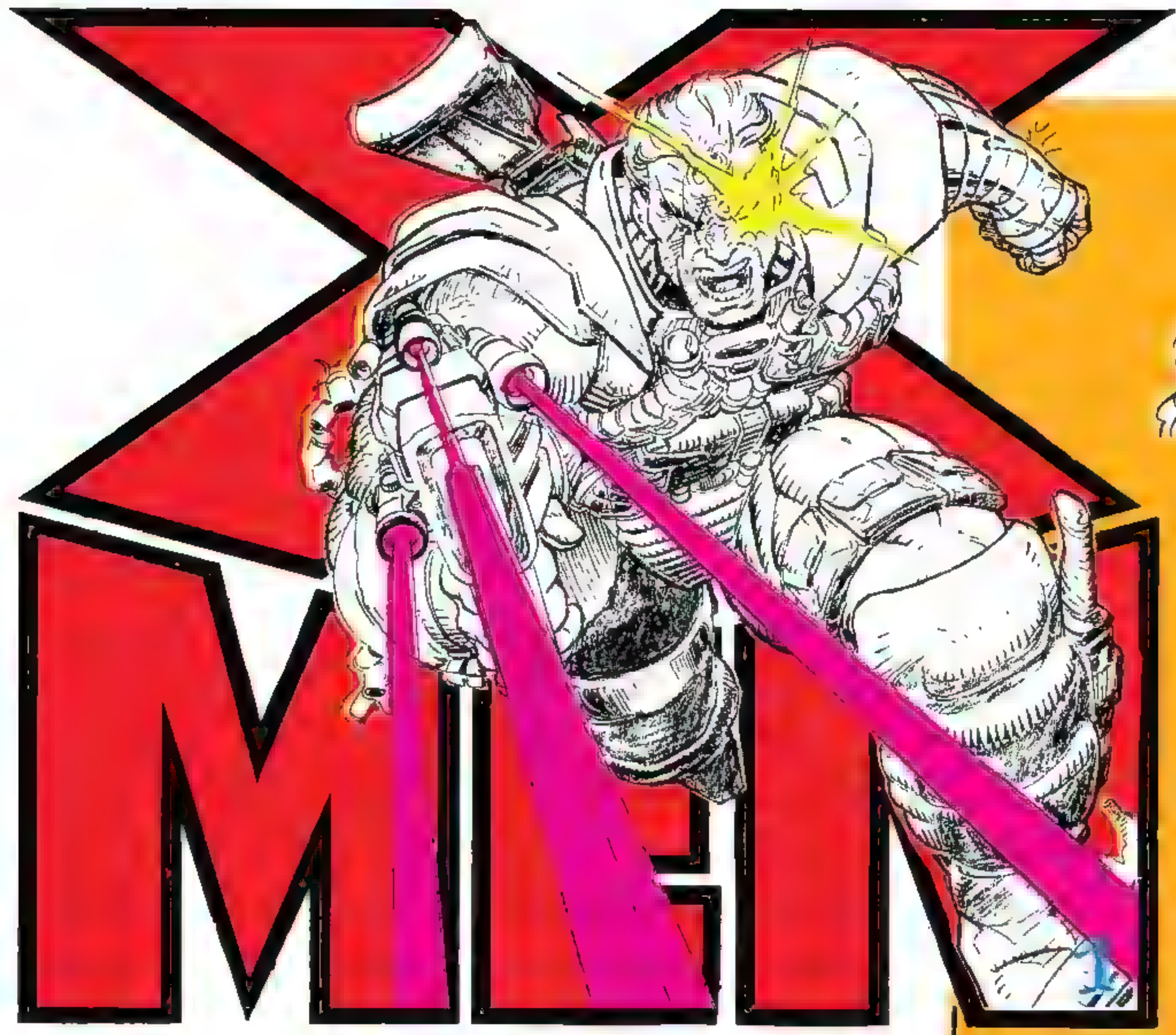
FN: All three of us, I believe, since we've been talking [with each other] so much more, and meeting so much more, we're more focused on how to accomplish the things we want to accomplish in these books, not the least of which, mind you, is entertaining the hell out of the readers on a monthly basis.

PD: Beyond telling stories about mutant angst, beyond telling stories about racial harmony, the dream, and this that and the other thing, the bottom line is that we're in the entertainment business. And each of us, whether through character-driven stories, or action, or whether the focus is on humor...we're all trying to entertain the people in our own ways.

– Evan Skolnick


MARVEL COMICS
PRESENTS
MAX-
IMUM
ANNIVERSARY
X-
PERIENCE!
AVENGERS

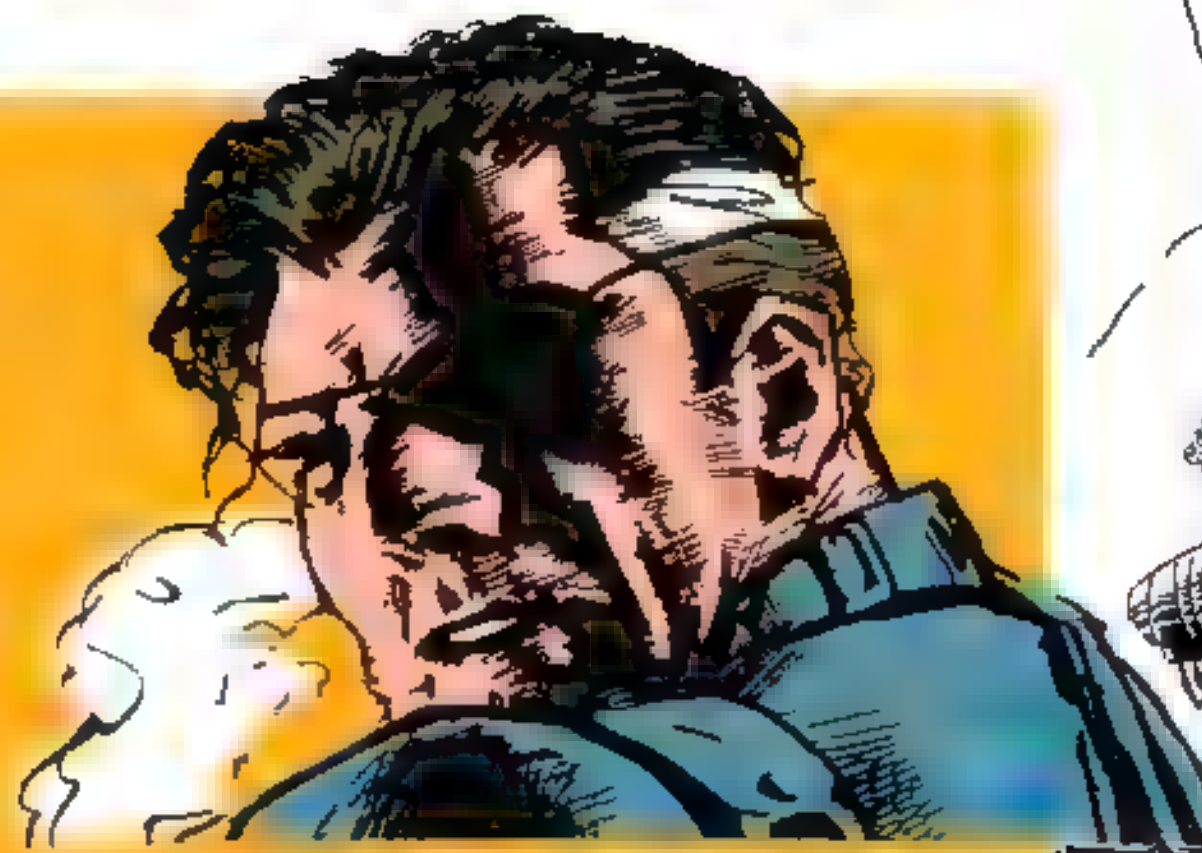
SUMMER 1993 WAS ALSO THE AVENGERS' 30TH ANNIVERSARY. *MAXIMUM ANNIVERSARY X-PERIENCE*, A SKETCHBOOK BOUND INTO MANY SPRING 1993 TITLES, PREVIEWED SEVERAL UPCOMING PROJECTS FOR BOTH THE X-MEN AND AVENGERS LINES — INCLUDING SOME THAT WERE ULTIMATELY NEVER PUBLISHED.



1

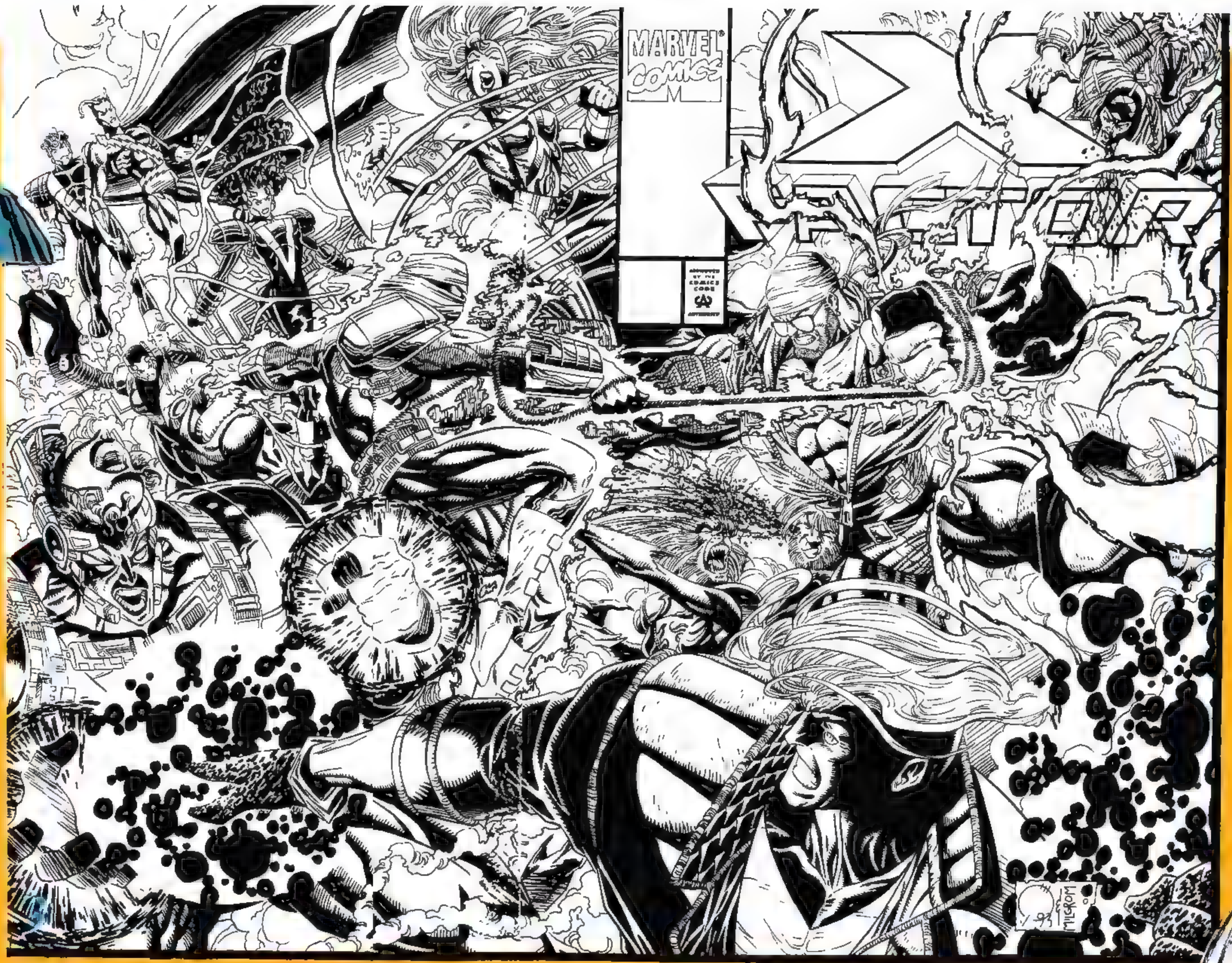
Back when I first hooked up with S.H.I.E.L.D.*, Xavier had things under control. Times have changed. Now, power's also sittin' in the hands of a bunch of blasted kids. Those X-Force brats runnin' 'round tryin' to act like grown ups. Now that Cable's returned, I figger they'll run right on back to him. An' X-Factor's still holdin' hands with Val Cooper. Wonder what they'll do when they find she's been involved with Project: Wideawake and the Sentinels? At least the mutant teams ain't fanatics. Not like the Acolytes. Now that Magneto's gone, they been tryin' ta kill normal kids in the name o' genetic cleansing. Their blamed Holy War is gettin' out of control. An' worse, they're poisonin' the minds of other mutants. Look at Quicksilver. Course, some of 'em don't need poisoning. Deadpool comes to mind. So does Sabretooth.

*STRATEGIC HAZARD INTERVENTION ESPIONAGE AND LOGISTICS DIRECTORATE



"I'M GETTIN' TOO OLD FOR THIS."

NICK FURY
SHIELD FILE #111761



1 PENCIL DRAWING FOR THE HOLOGRAM FOR X-FORCE #25'S SPECIAL COVER, PENCILED BY GREG CAPULLO AND WRITTEN BY FABIAN NICIEZA.

2 OUR NARRATOR, NICK FURY, HEAD OF THE INTERNATIONAL COVERT STRIKE TEAM, S.H.I.E.L.D. DRAWN BY MARK TEXEIRA.

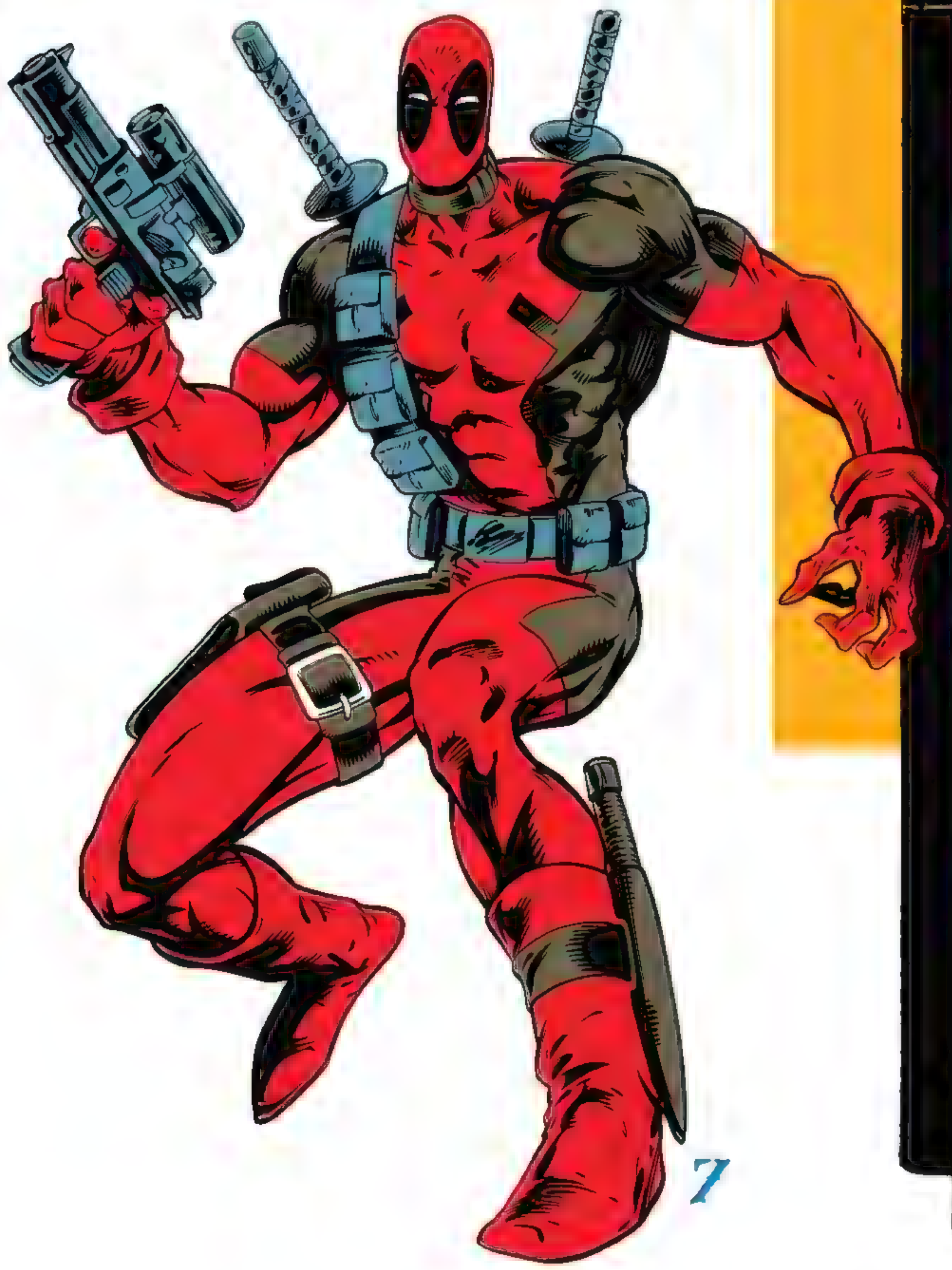
3 HOLOGRAM COVER TO X-FACTOR #92, WRITTEN BY SCOTT LOBDELL, PENCILED BY JOE QUESADA AND INKED BY AL MILGROM.

4 ARTIST JOE QUESADA'S PRELIMINARY SKETCH OF A NEW CHARACTER CALLED EXODUS.

5 PINUP FOR THE 4-ISSUE SABRETOOTH LIMITED SERIES WHICH WILL BE DRAWN BY MARK TEXEIRA AND WRITTEN BY LARRY HAMA.

6 PINUP FOR CABLE'S NEW MONTHLY SERIES. WRITTEN BY FABIAN NICIEZA AND PENCILED BY ART THIBERT.

7 PART OF THE COVER TO THE 4-ISSUE DEADPOOL LIMITED SERIES, PENCILED BY JOE MADUREIRA, INKED BY MARK FARMER AND WRITTEN BY FABIAN NICIEZA.



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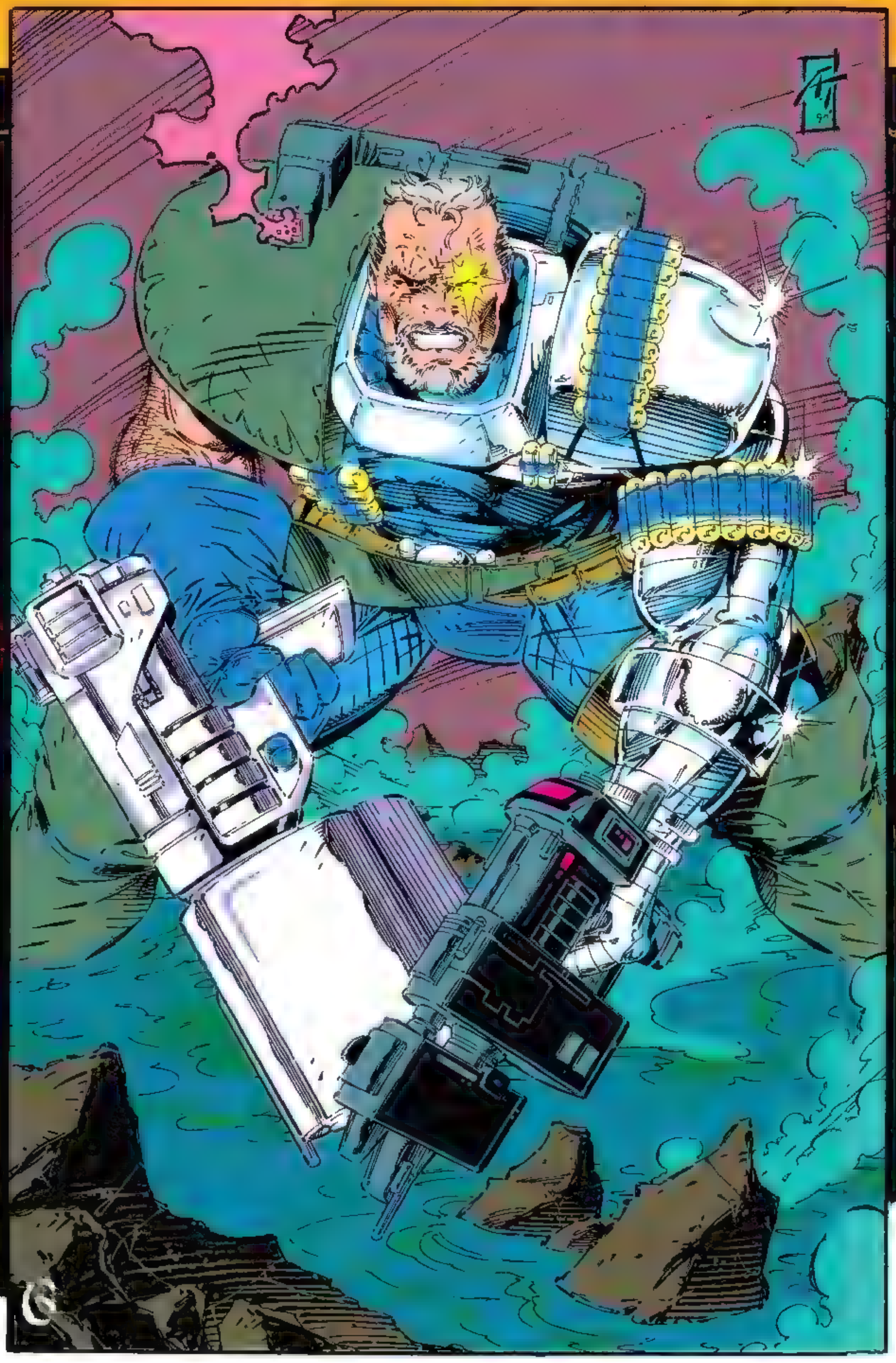

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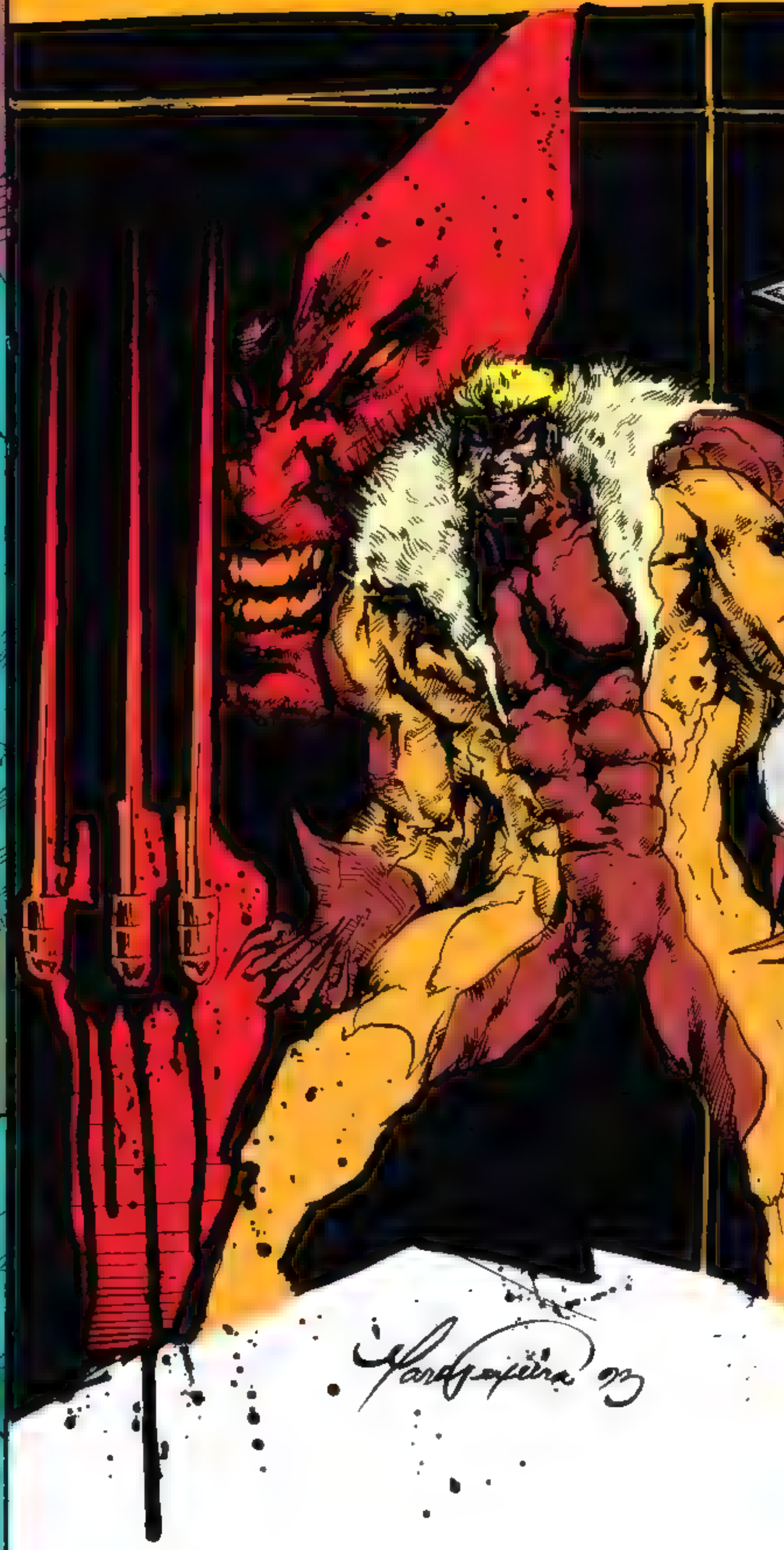

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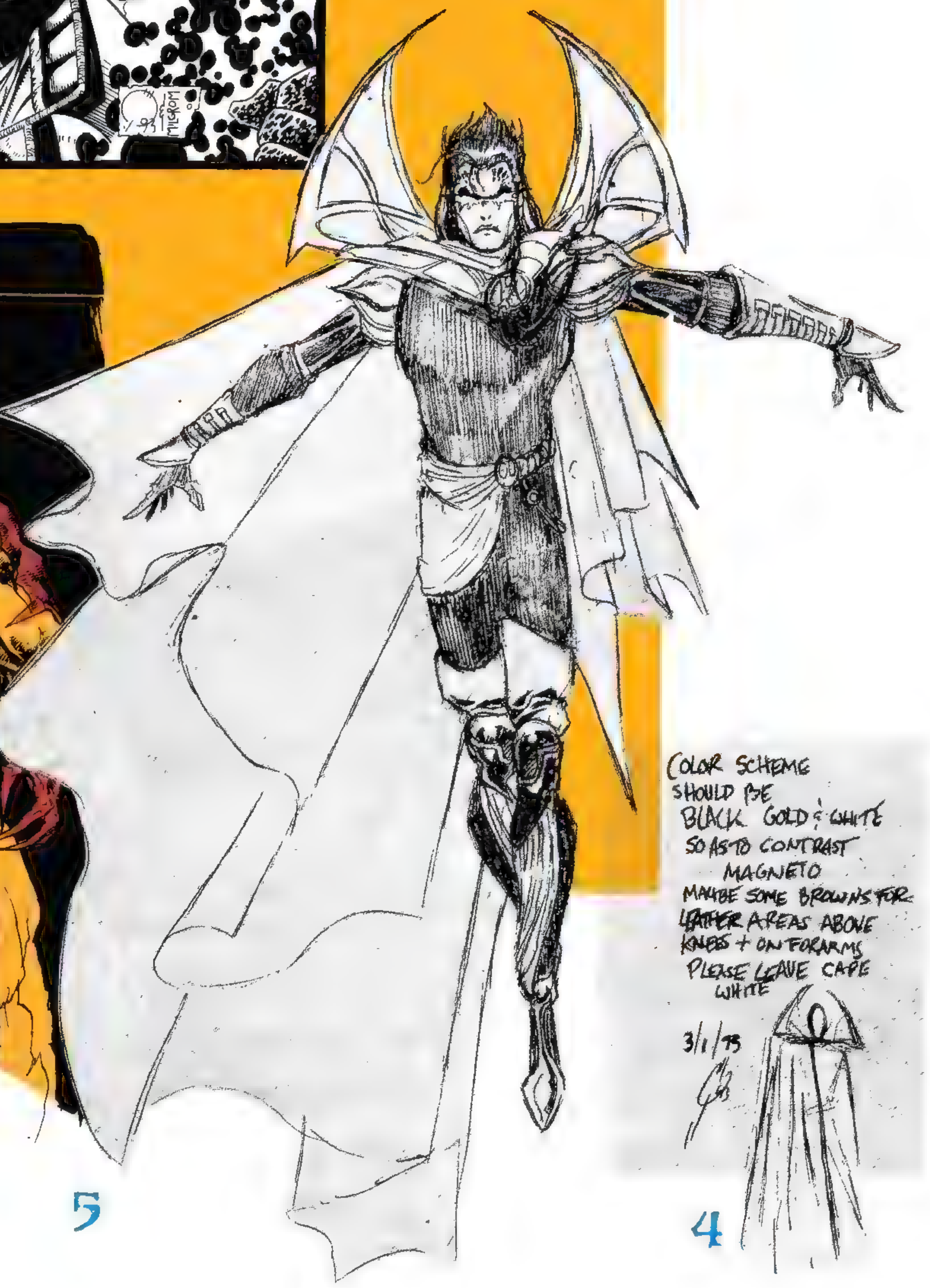
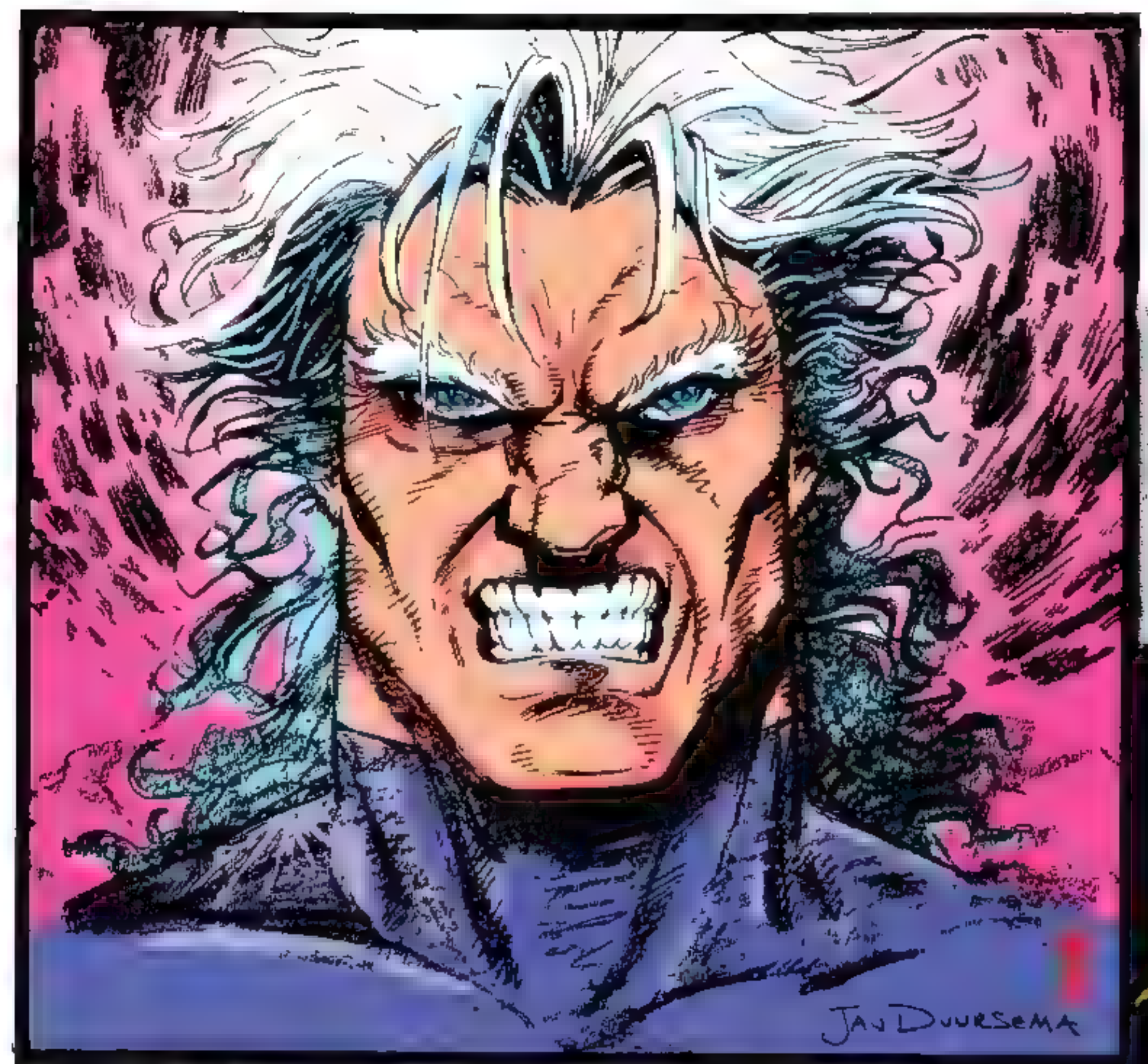


COLOR SCHEME
SHOULD BE
BLACK GOLD & WHITE
SO AS TO CONTRAST
MAGNETO
MAYBE SOME BROWNS FOR
LEATHER AREAS ABOVE
KNEES + ON FORARMS
PLEASE LEAVE CAPE
WHITE

3/1/93

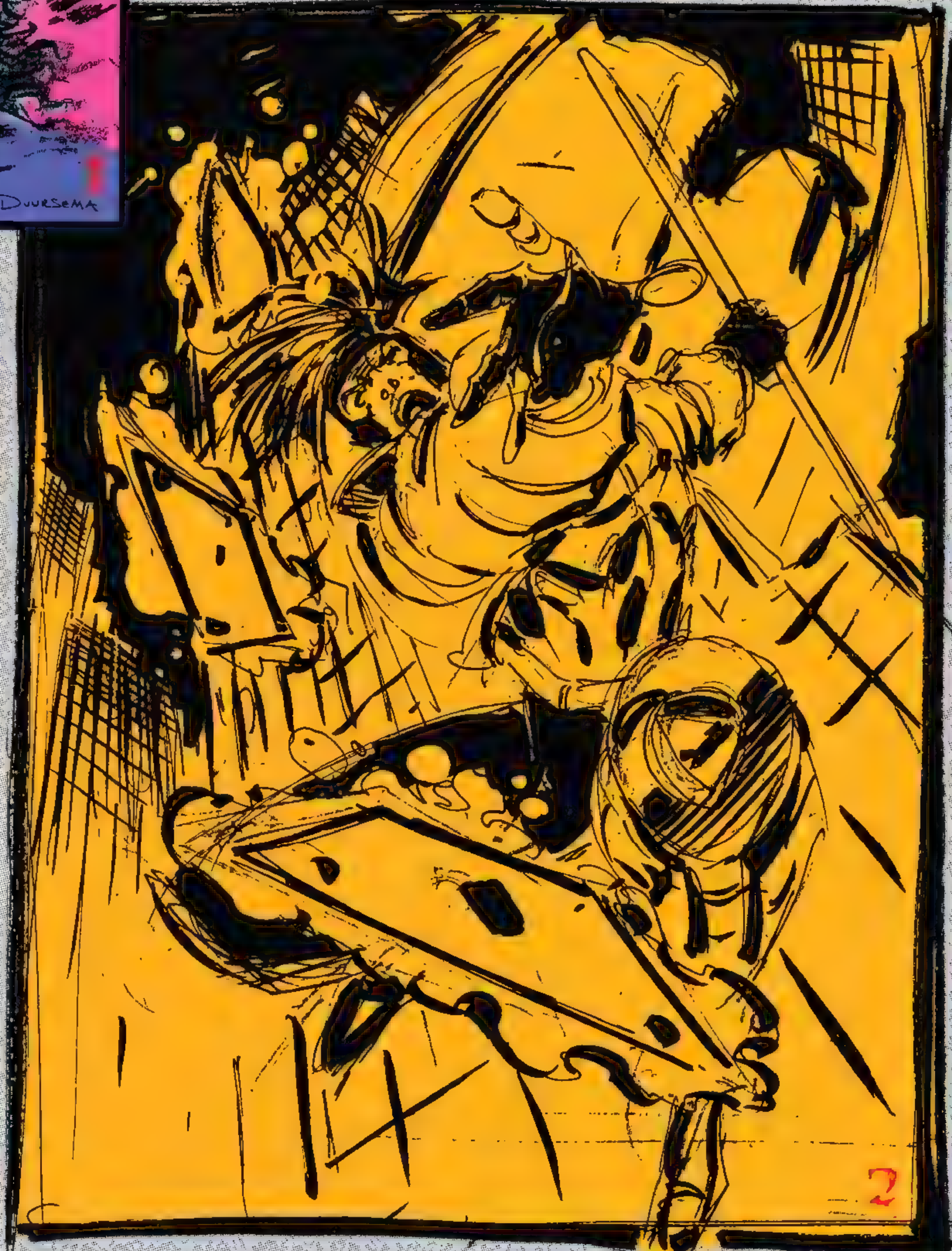
4

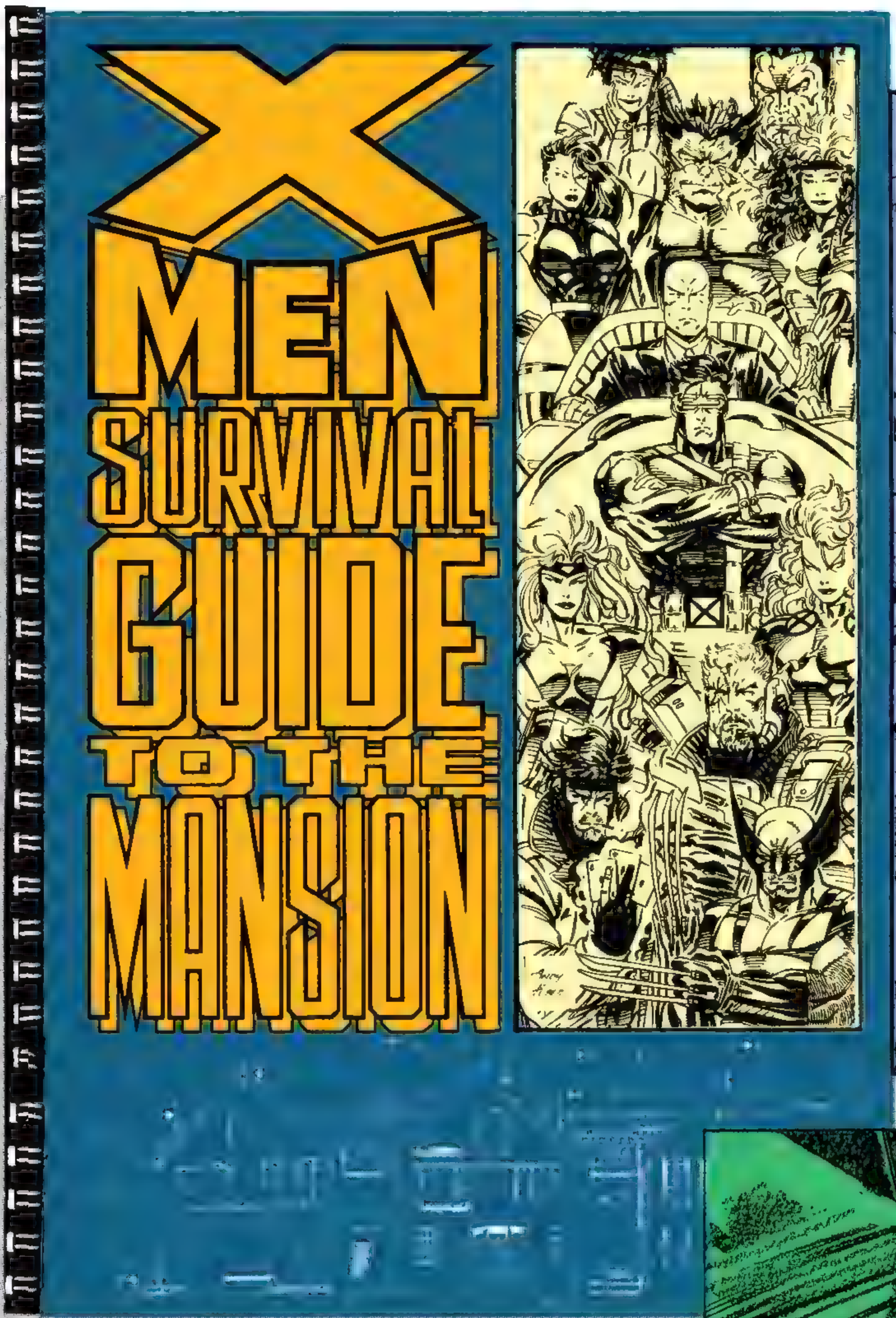


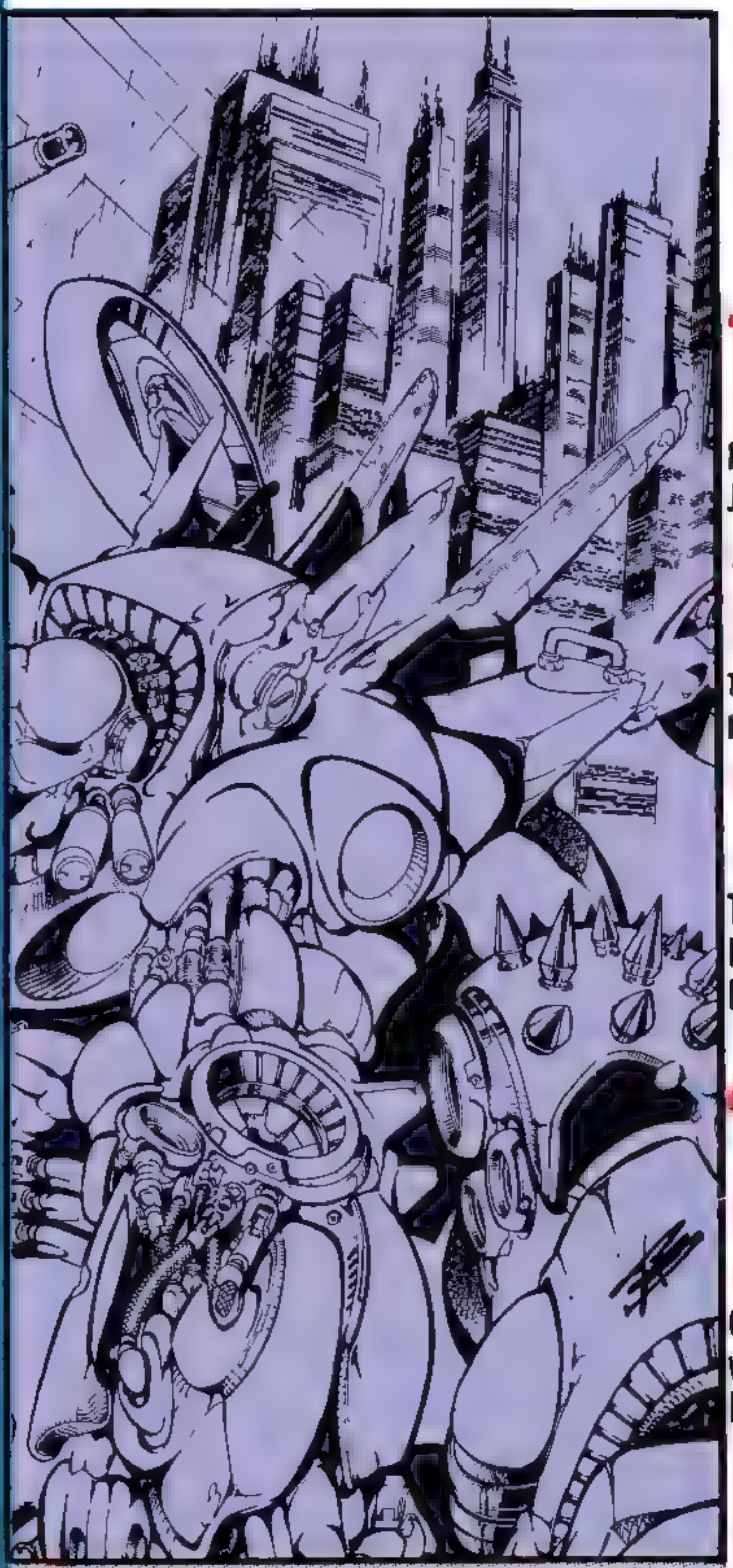
"DYIN' USED TO MEAN SOMETHING TO THE LIVIN'."

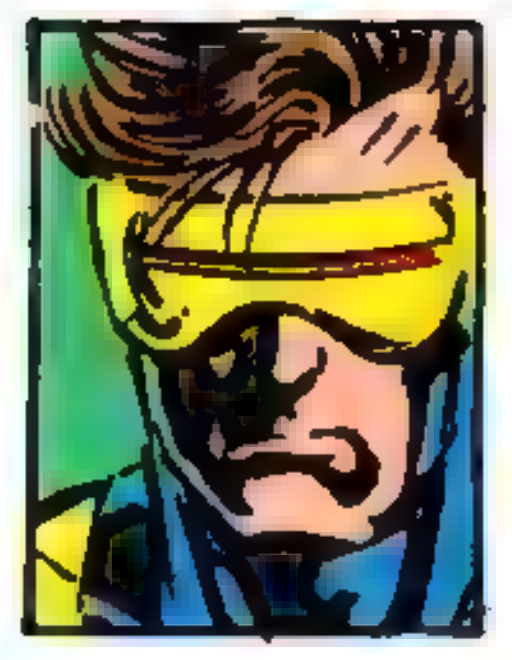
NICK FURY
SHIELD FILE #021566

What I'm hearin' says maybe Magneto's not dead. If he's alive, an' if he's back, what's he want? More I find out, more a question he becomes. Maybe If I knew more of what Xavier knows...but his files are a tough nut to crack--what with the Shi'ar technology and the man's blasted telepathy. I'd give up smokin' cigars to get my hands on a copy of the guide Xavier gives his students. At least fer a week. Be interestin' to know what the X-Men were taught. Or even the effects of Magneto's teachin'.









1 Pencil drawing for X-Men Unlimited #2, written by Fabian Nicieza and penciled by Jan Duursema

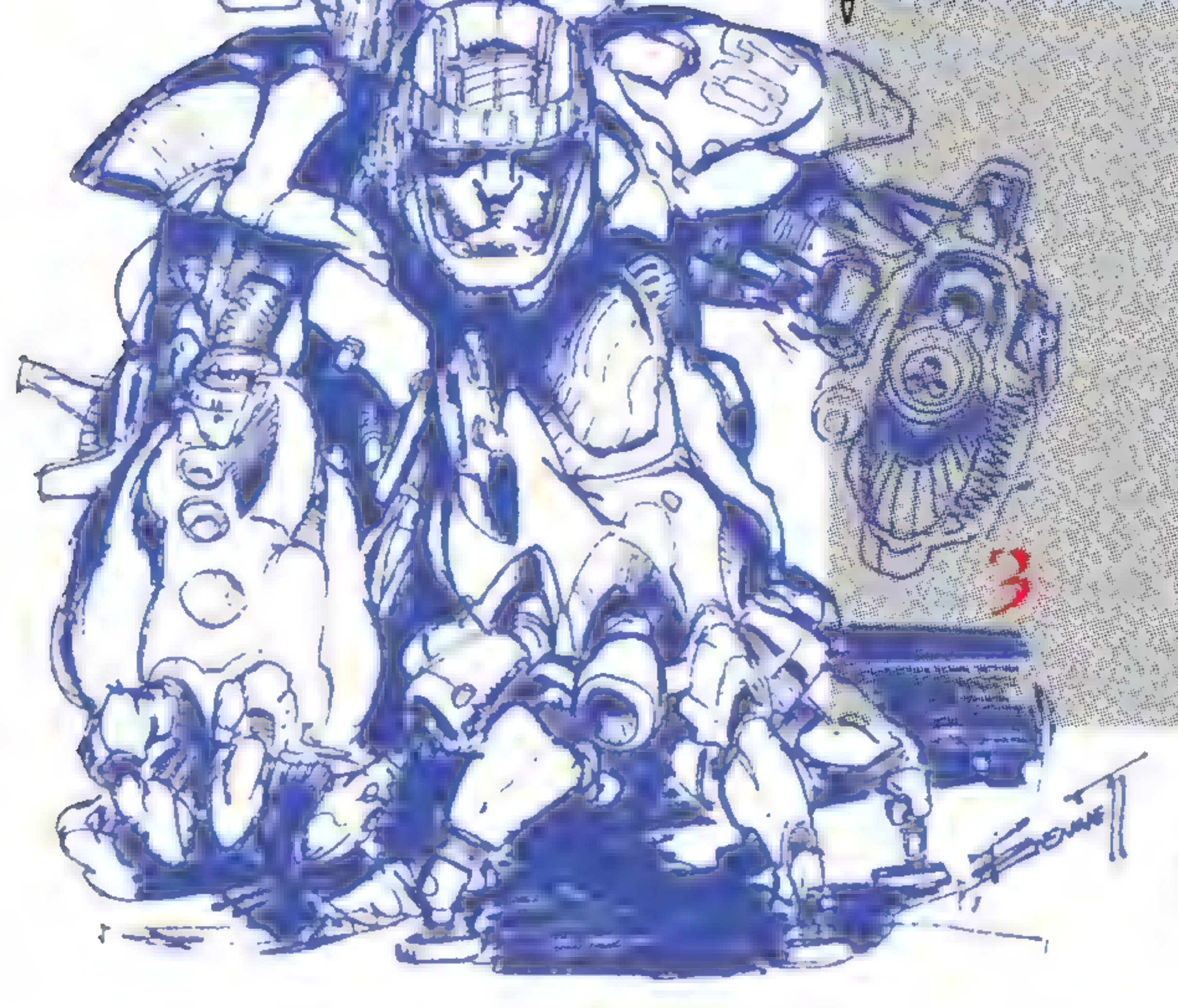
2 Pencil sketch for hologram cover to X-Men #25, written by Fabian Nicieza, drawn by Andy Kubert.

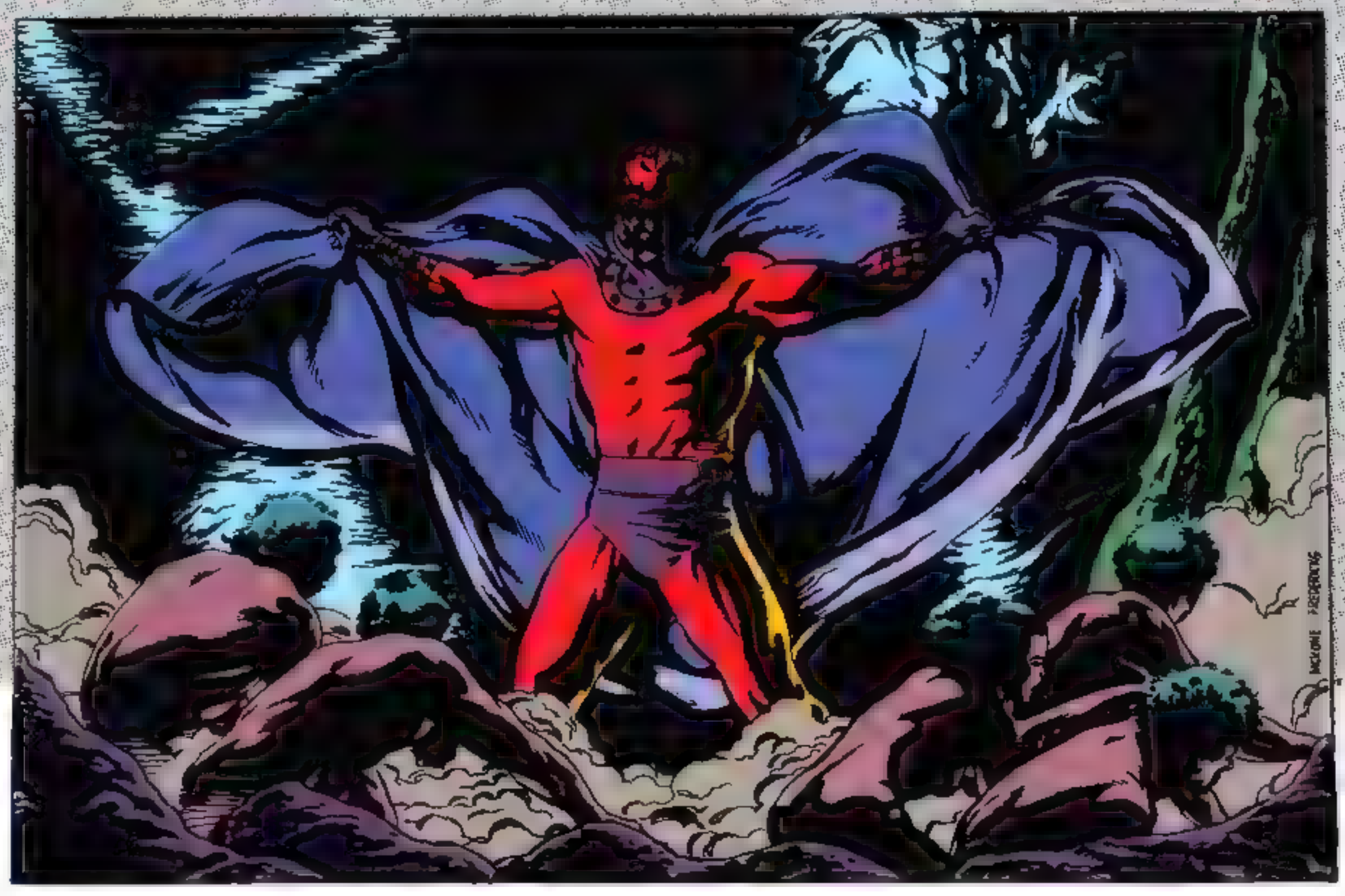
3 Cover and interior pages from X-Men Survival Guide to the Mansion, by Richard Bennett and Eliot Brown.

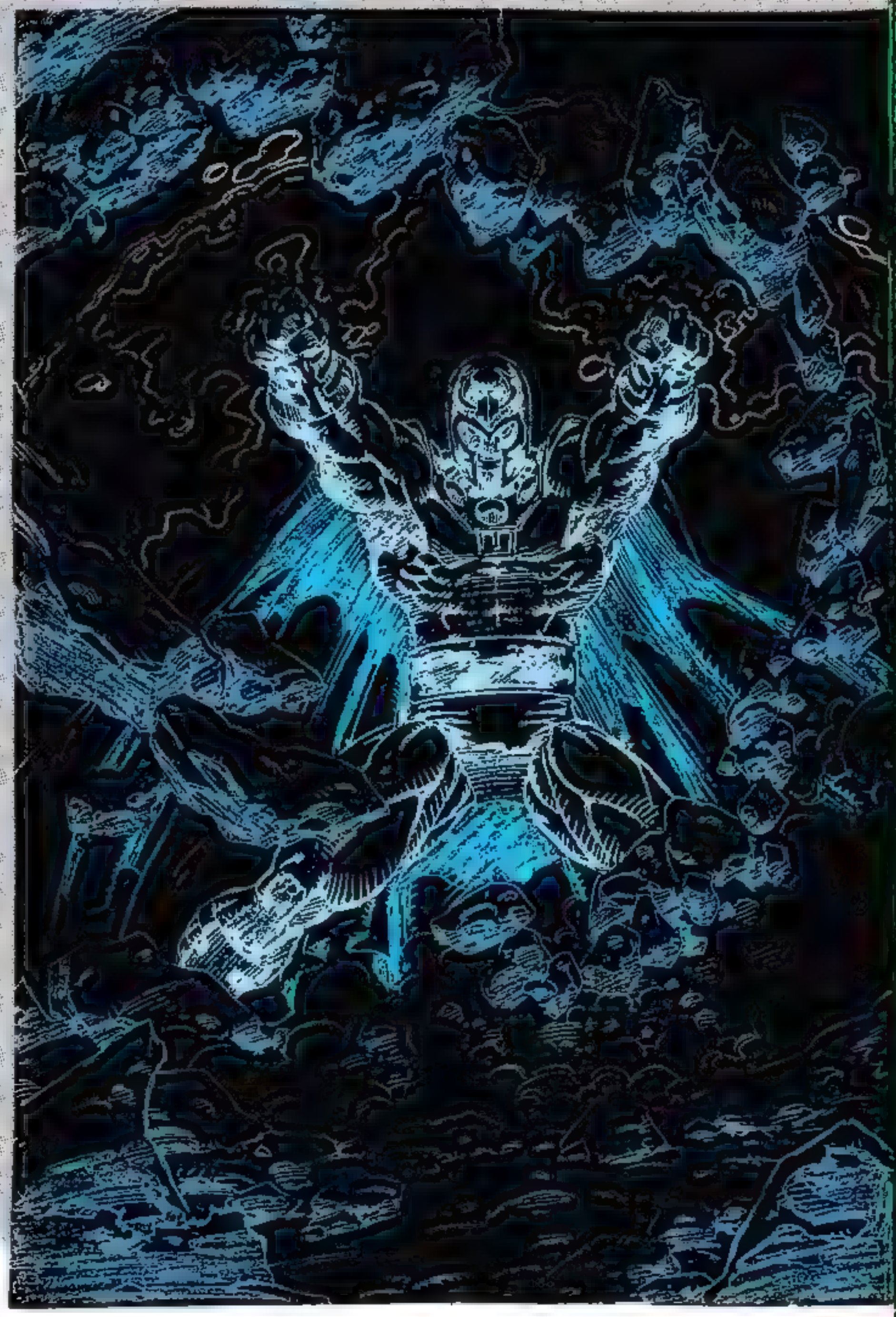
4 Pencil drawing for the Xavier Files by Dwayne Turner.

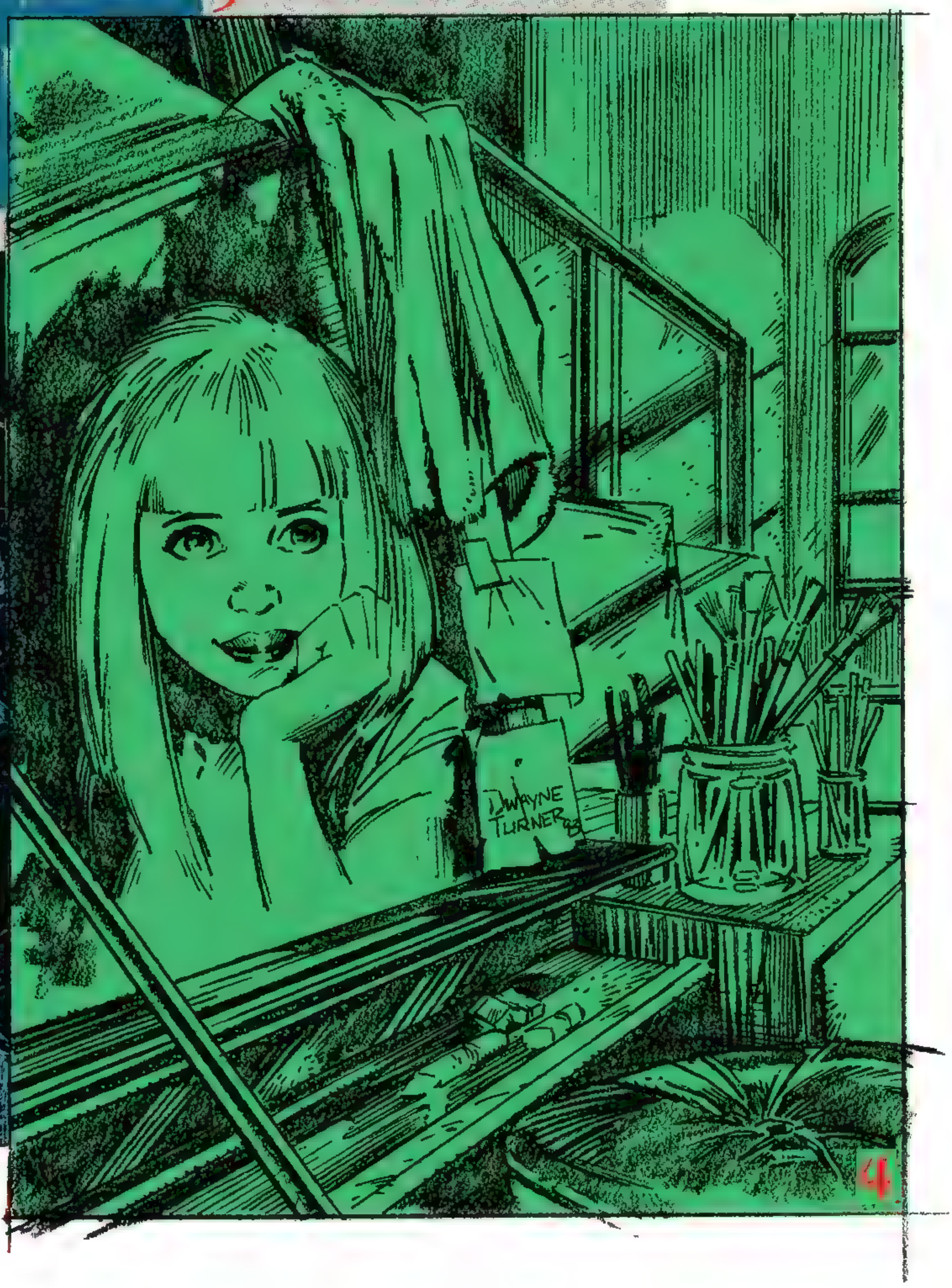
5 Pencil for hologram cover to Uncanny X-Men #304 by Greg Capullo. The issue will be written by Scott Lobdell.

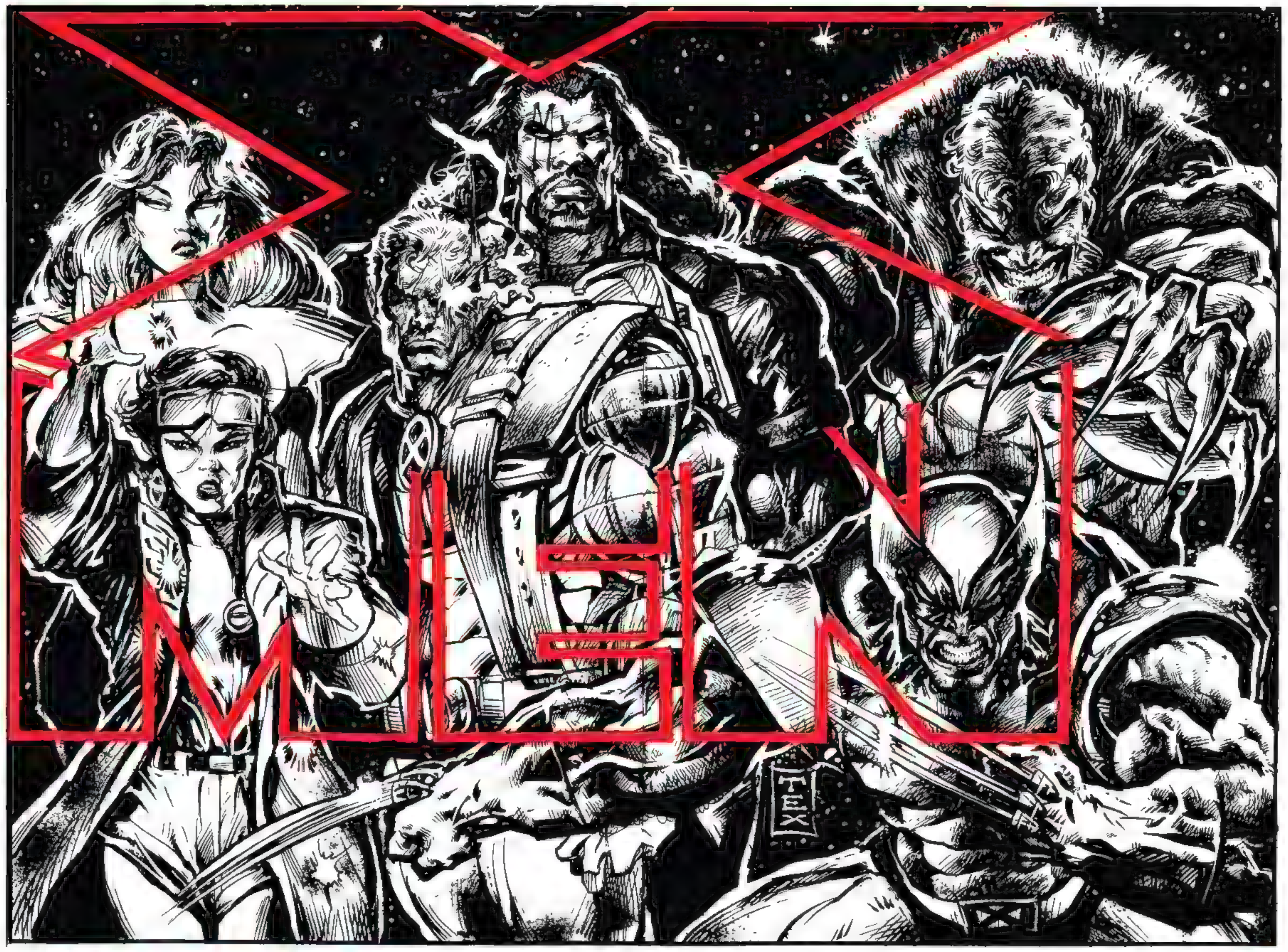
6 Pinup for X-Men Unlimited #2 by Mike McKone and Fred Fredericks.









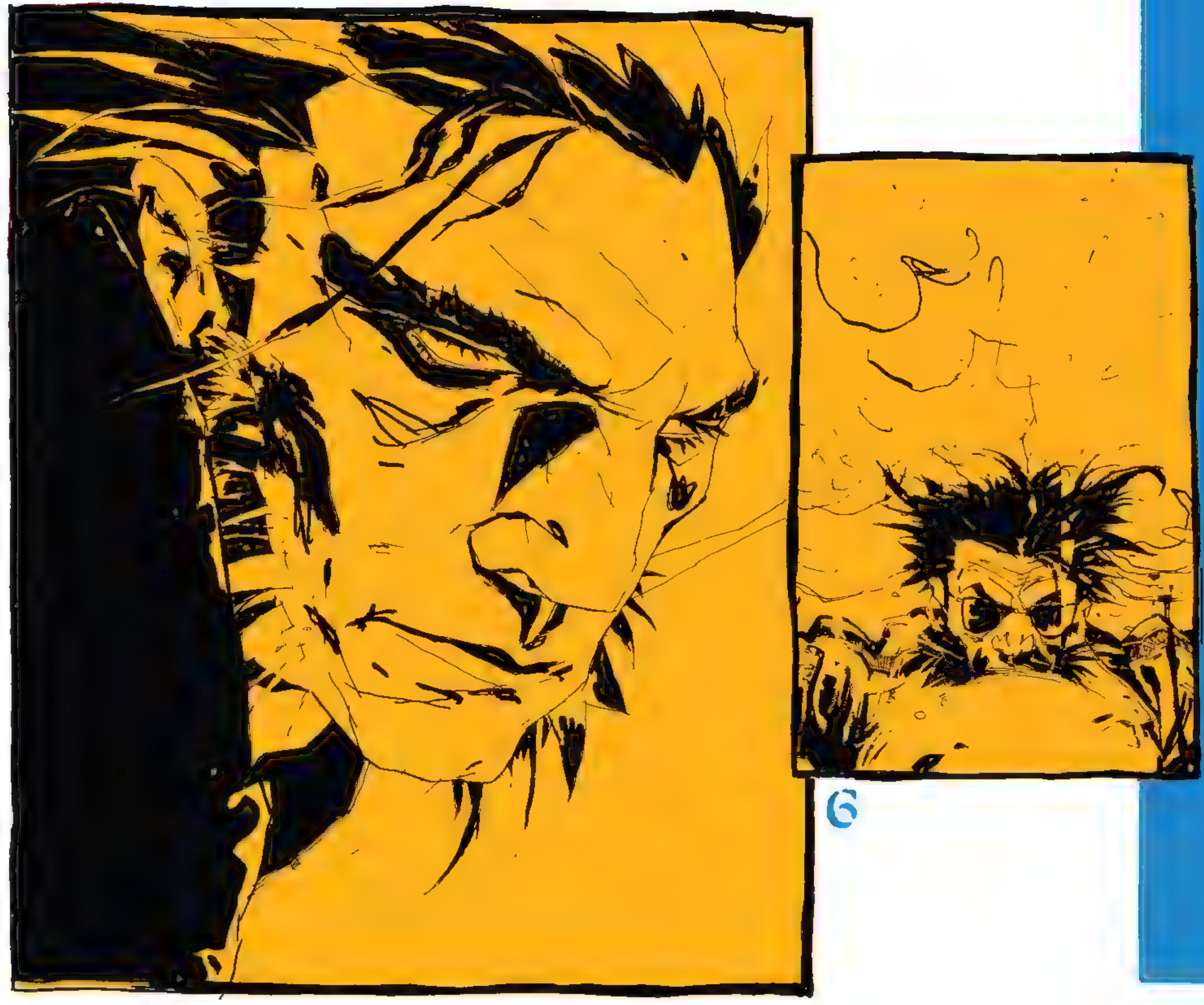


1

"NOT THE BEST AT KNOWIN' WHO HE IS!"

NICK FURY
SHIELD FILE #082166

My life's been 'bout keepin' secrets. Logan's life's nothin' but. The more Logan learns 'bout himself, the more dangerous he's becomin'. He's a man fightin' 'gainst himself-decidin' if his backbone comes from his adamantium or his guts. I wouldn't want his nightmares for all the money in the world. Even as an X-Man, he's a loner. All the dames he ever cared about are either dead or belong to someone else. Guy he seemed closest to was Nightcrawler, a German mutant with the ability to tel'port. File says he's in with a Brit group called Excalibur. An' Excalibur's tied to the Resources Control Executive. Is there a connection? Knowin' those R.C.X. idiots, if there was, they'd miss it.



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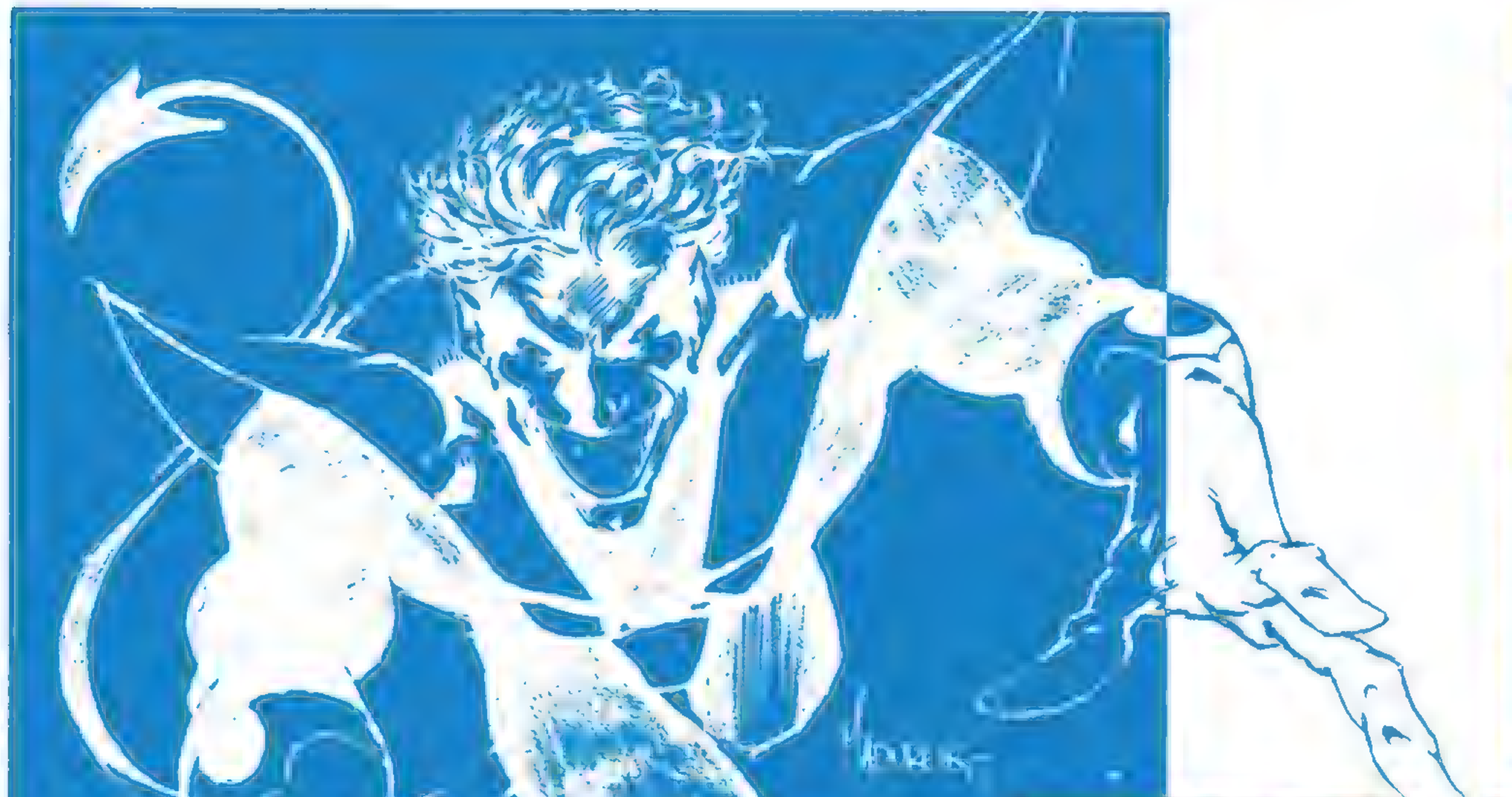

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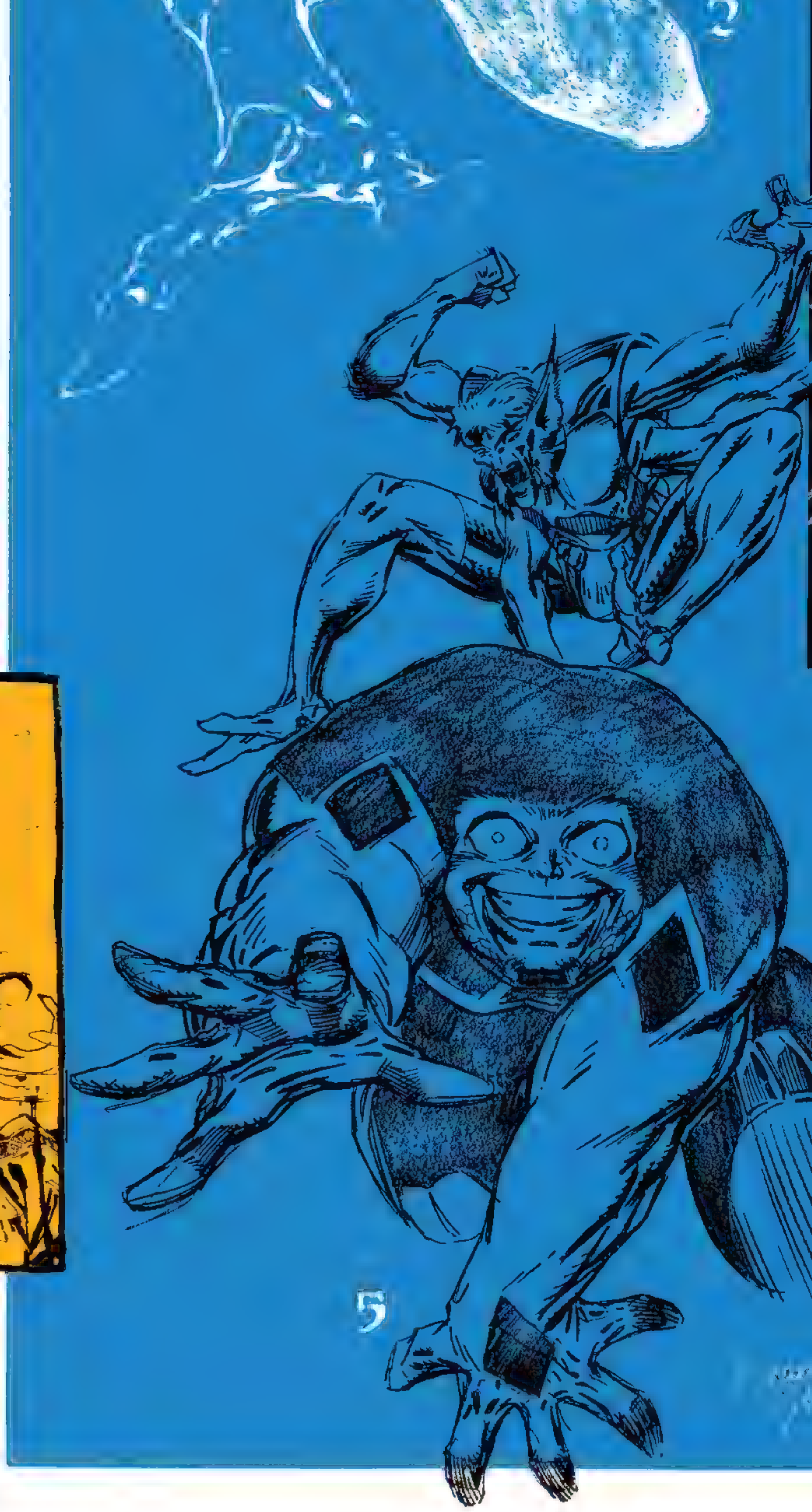

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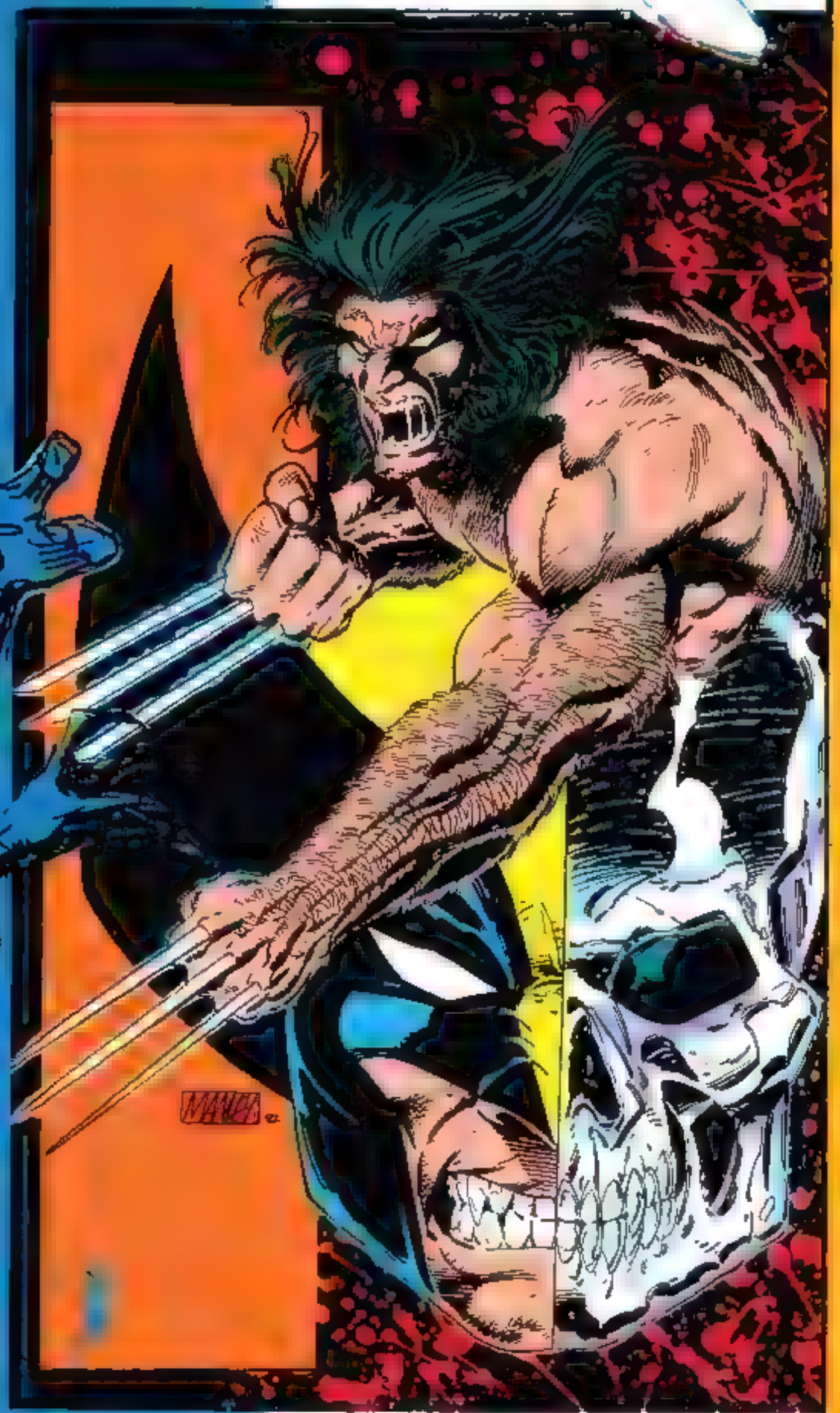


3

1 Cover for X-Men Poster Magazine #2 by Mark Texeira.

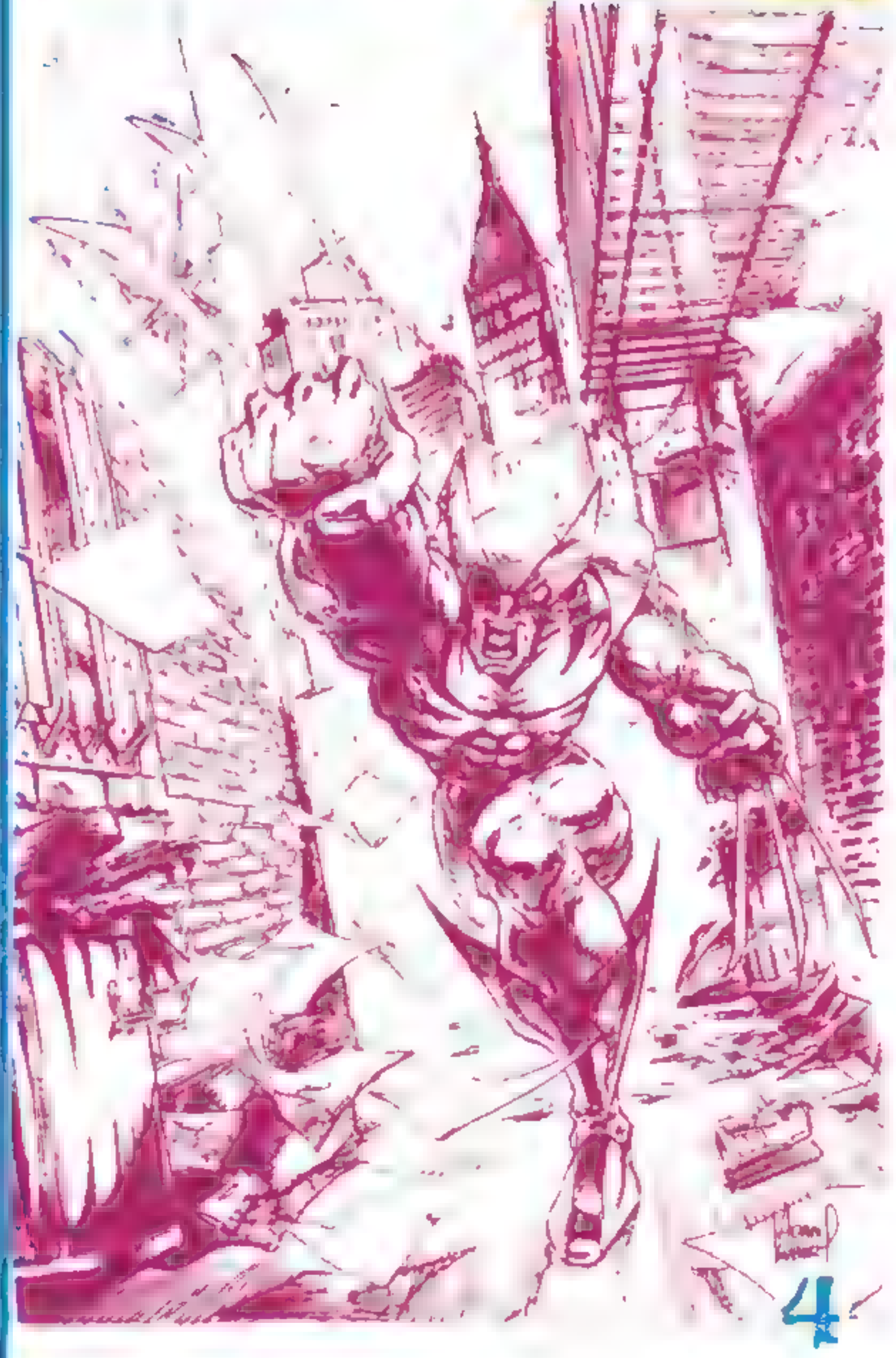
2 Pencil drawing by Joe Madureira for Excalibur #71, the special hologram issue, which will be written by Scott Lobdell.

3 Cover to Wolverine Limited Series by Make Manley, written by Alan Grant and John Wagner.

4 Pencils for the hologram for Wolverine #75 by Adam Kubert, written by Larry Hama.

5 Penciled pinup for the Tech-Net Limited Series by Dwayne Turner.

6 Inked pages from the Wolverine: Killing bookshelf, written by John Reiber, drawn by Kent Williams.



4

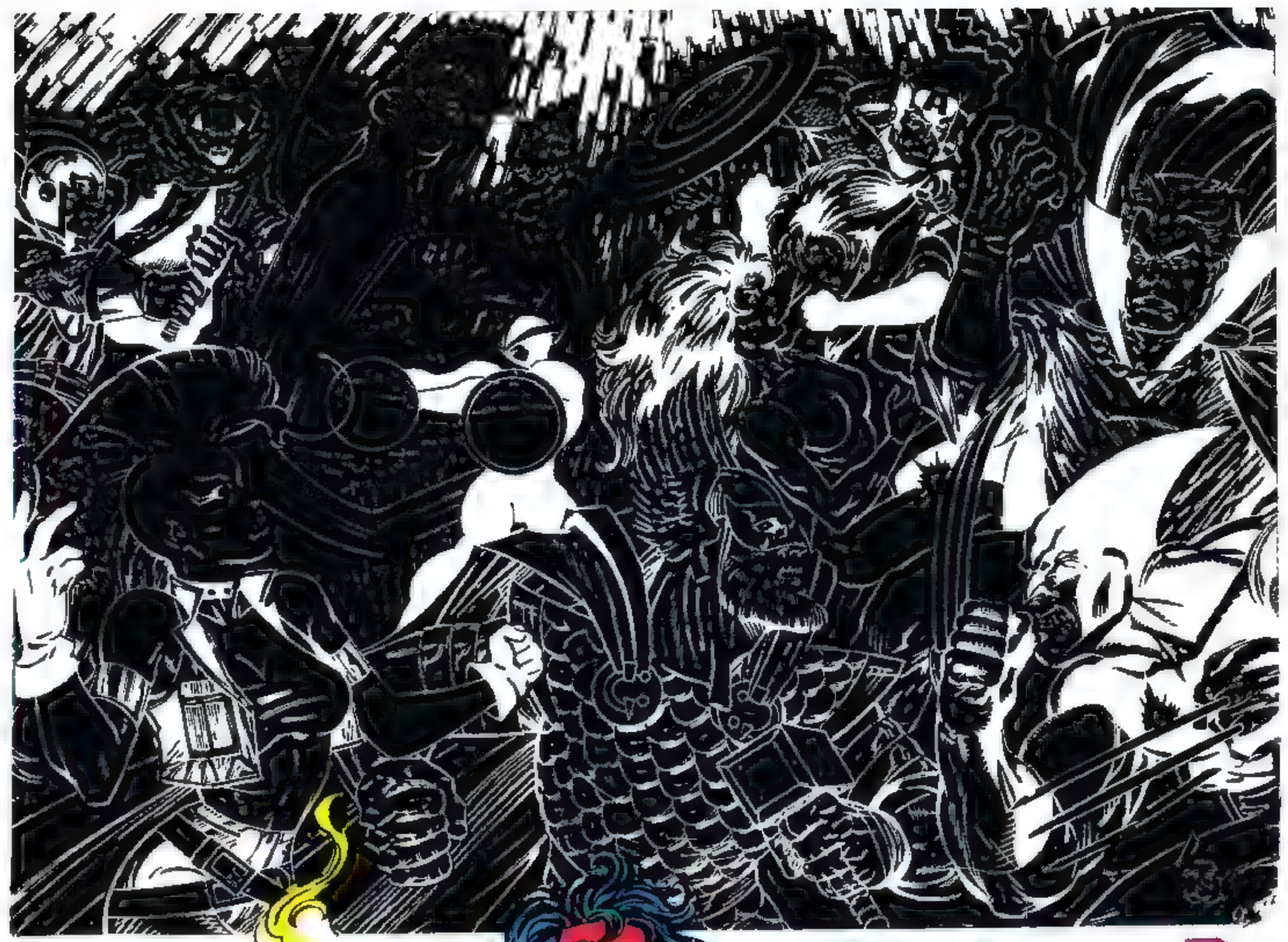
1

"SOMETIMES THIS JOB STINKS."

NICK FURY
SHIELD FILE #062592

How come people fightin' fer the good of the common man ain't never common -- mutants, Inhumans, Eternals, syntheziods--an' always the most misunderstood. By the common man an' each other.

Funny how the X-Men an' Avengers go at it like these two do--an' usually over Magneto, the X-Men's worst enemy and a once trusted teacher. 'Course, even men of power have their weaknesses. Like Magneto's family, the Scarlet Witch, Quicksilver and Crystal. Where do they fit inta this? An' if it turns out Magneto is alive, what side will they be on? Two are Avengers and the other's with X-Factor. An' the be all an' end all is the fact that Quicksilver and Crystal's daughter, Magneto's granddaughter, is human. Talk 'bout yer dysfunctional families. Jus' wish they'd keep their problems at home.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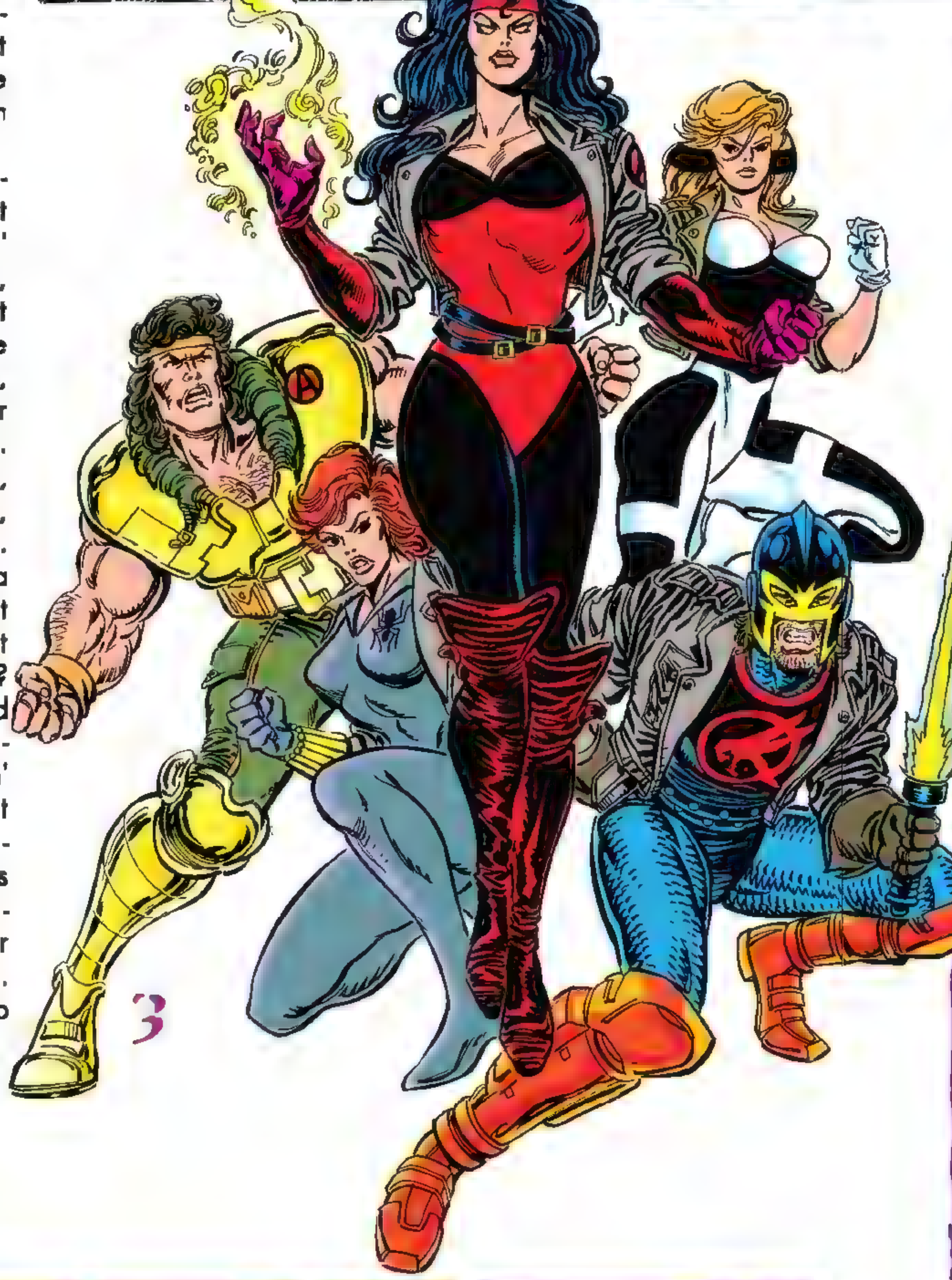
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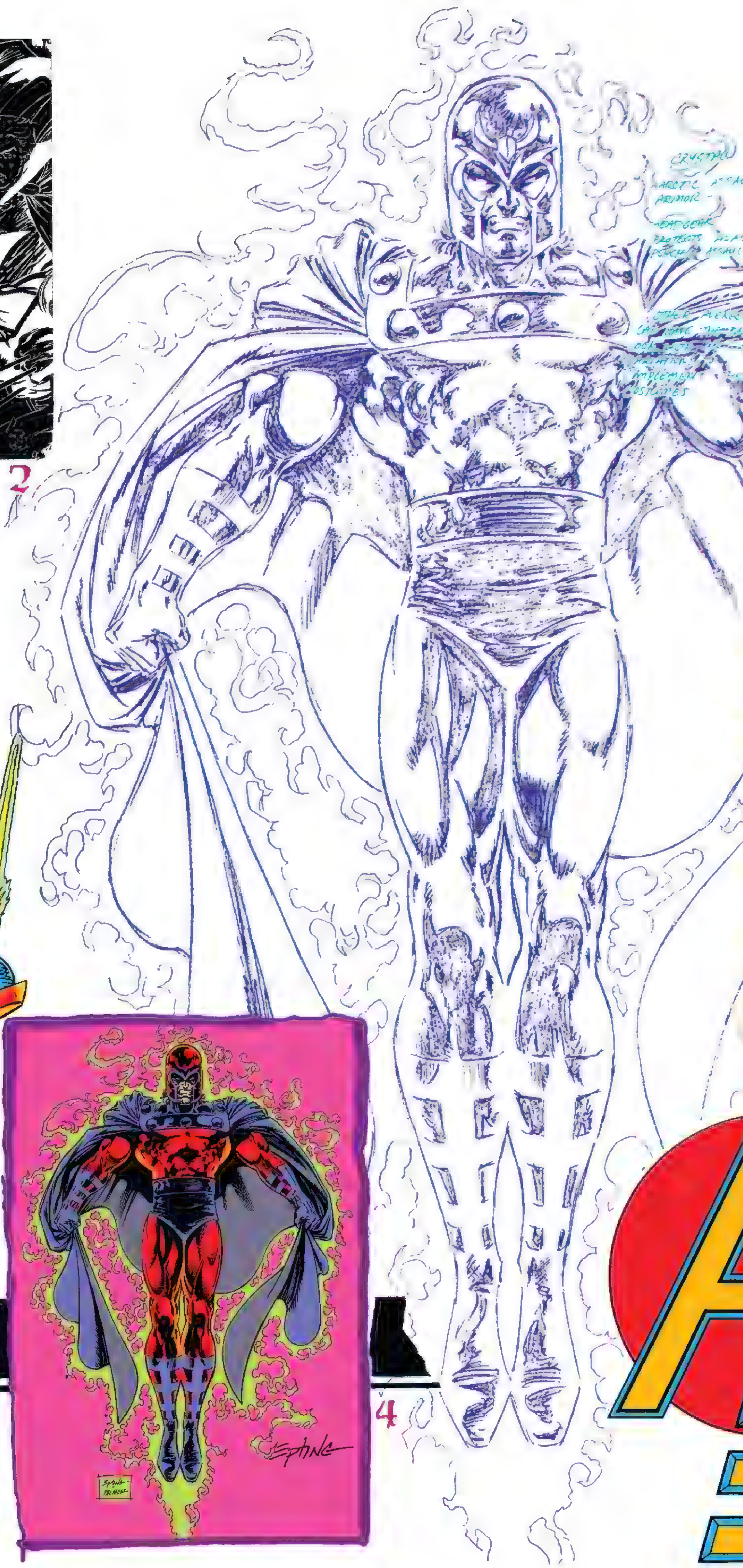

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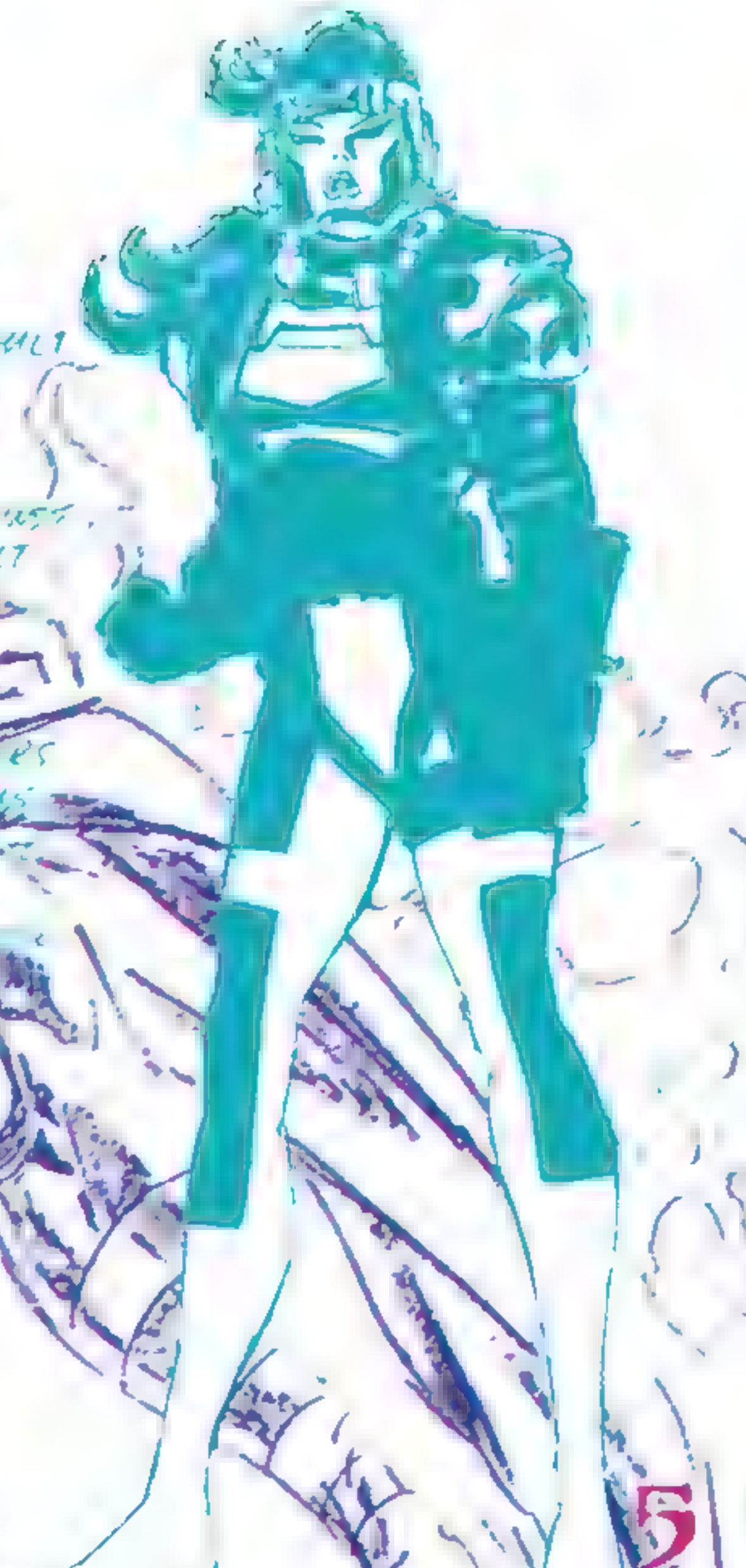

CRYSTAL
ARCTIC ASSAULT ARMOR -
HEADGEAR PROTECTS AGAINST PSYCHIC ASSAULT
OTHER AVENGERS CAN HAVE THE
IMPLEMENT
COSTUMES
5

1 Penciled pages from AVENGERS #363 by Steve Epting, written by Bob Harras.

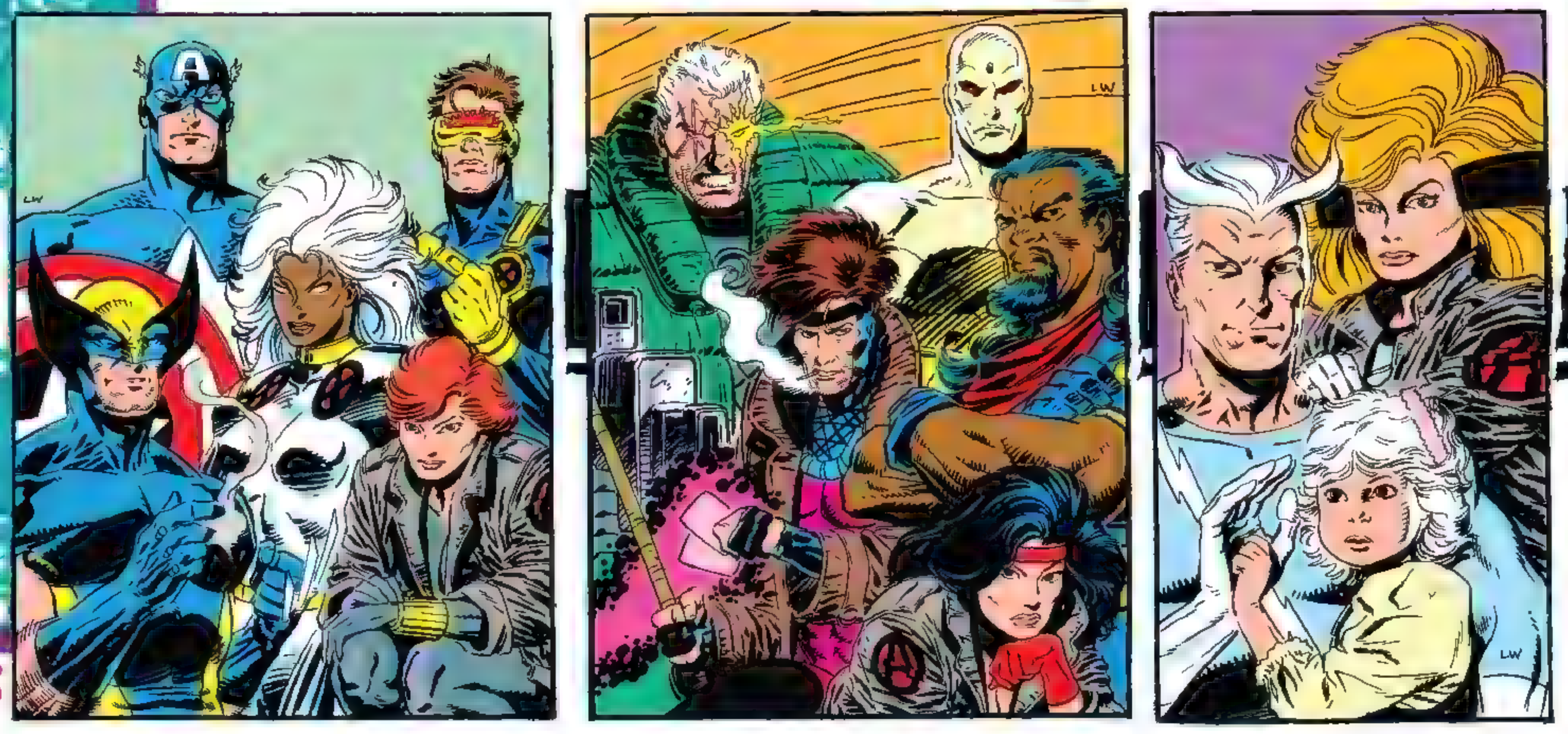
2 Inked cover to the X-MEN/AVENGERS trade paperback by Kirk Jarvinen.

3 Cover to AVENGERS #366 by Steve Epting and Tom Palmer. Written by Bob Harras.

4 Steve Epting and Tom Palmer's pencil and inks of Magneto for the upcoming X-MEN/AVENGERS crossover.

5 A sketch for Crystal of the Avengers new costume by Steve Epting.

6 Artwork for the new trading cards celebrating the X-Men and Avengers 30th Anniversary by Lee Weeks.



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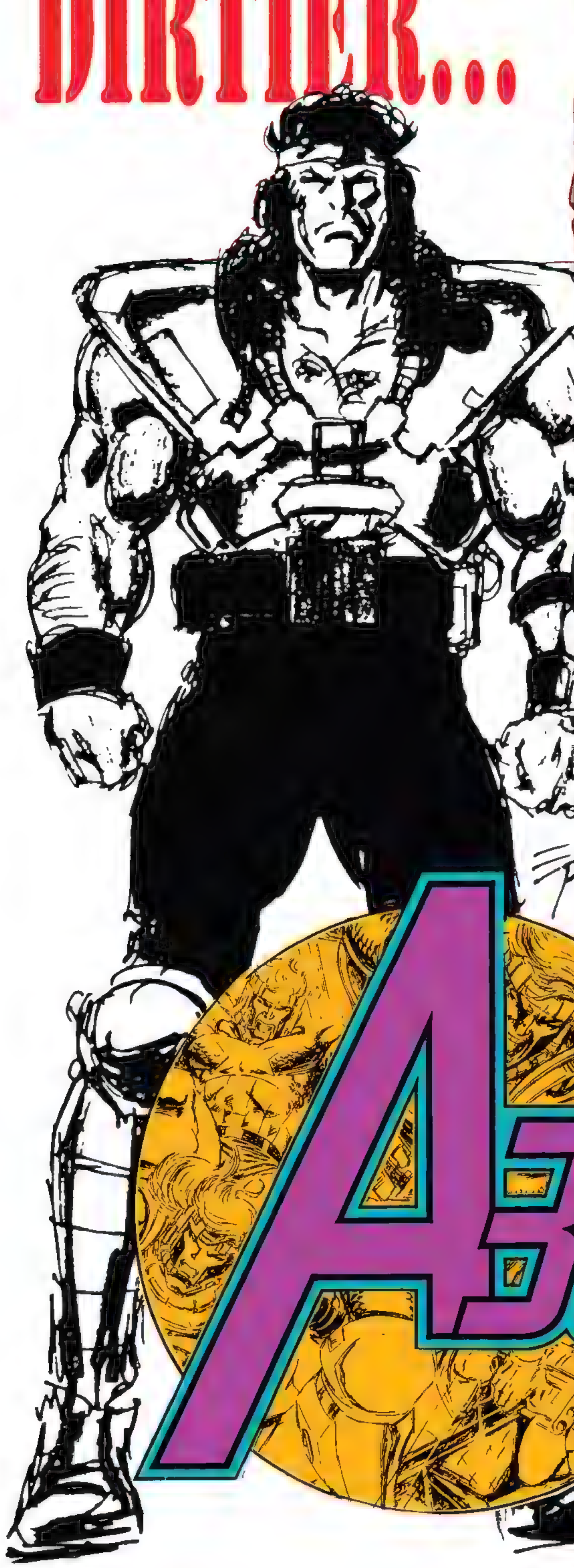
"THE WAR'S GETTIN' DIRTIER...



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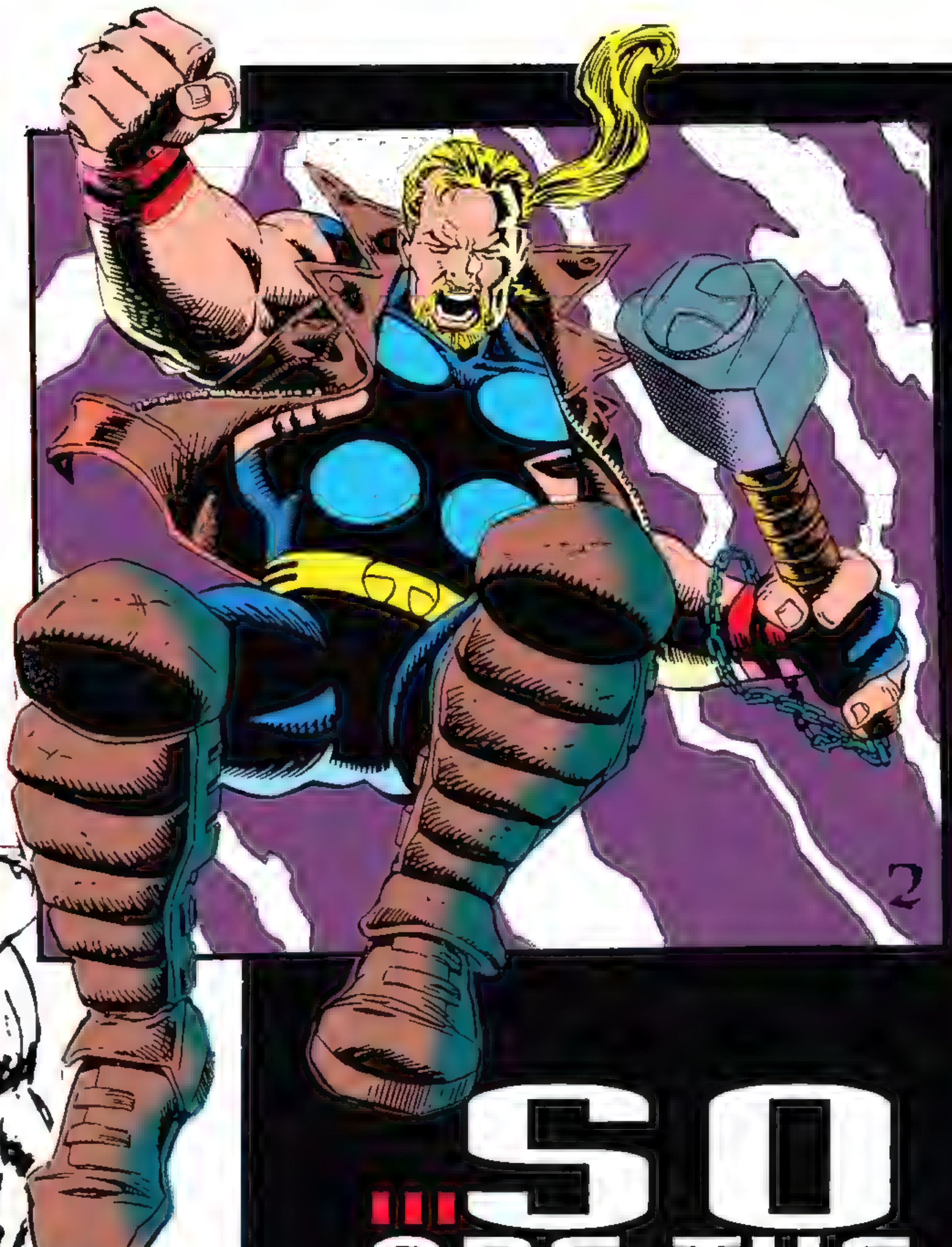
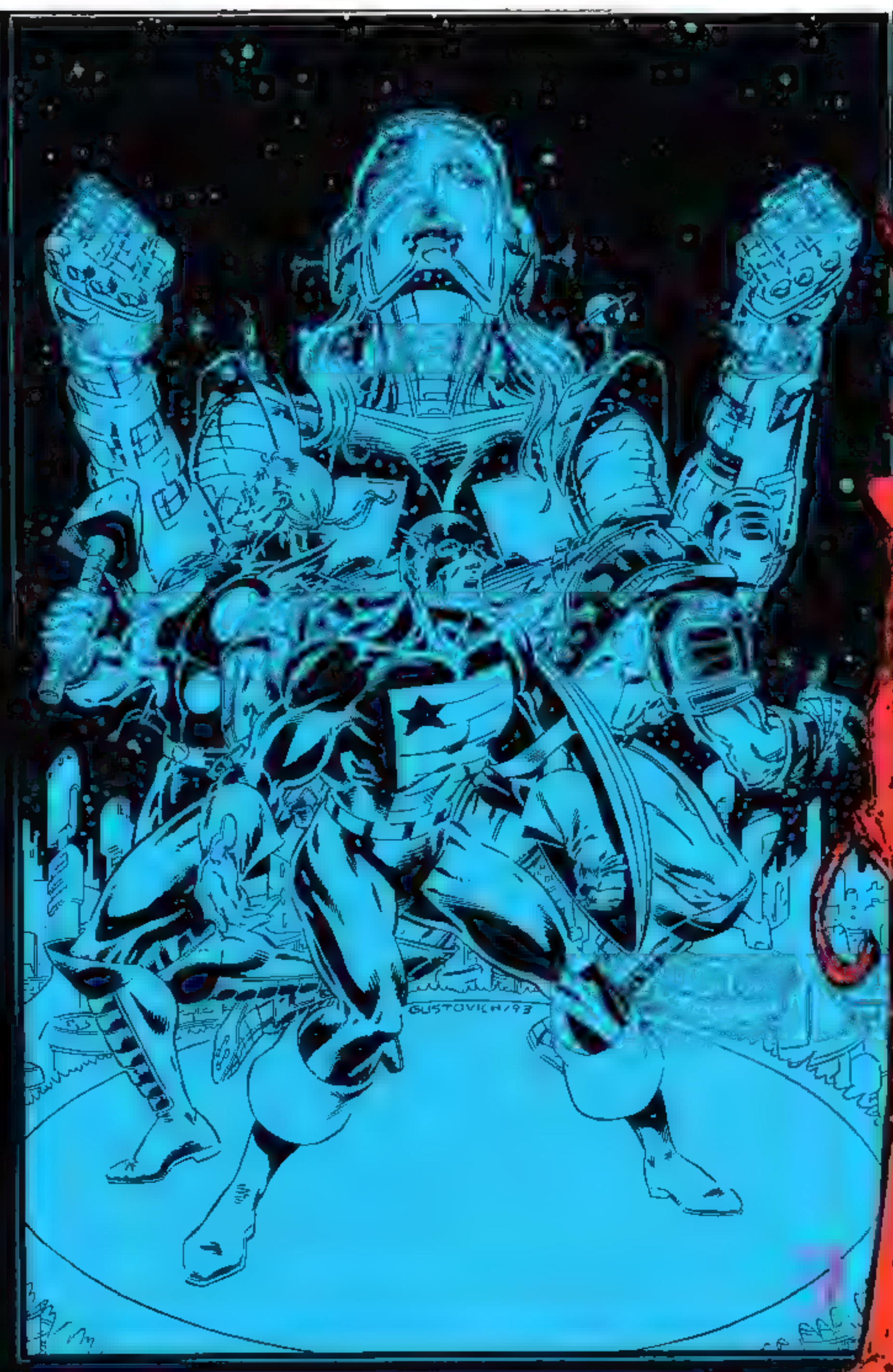
A 30TH



2

...SO ARE THE HEROES."

NICK FURY
SHIELD FILE #011693



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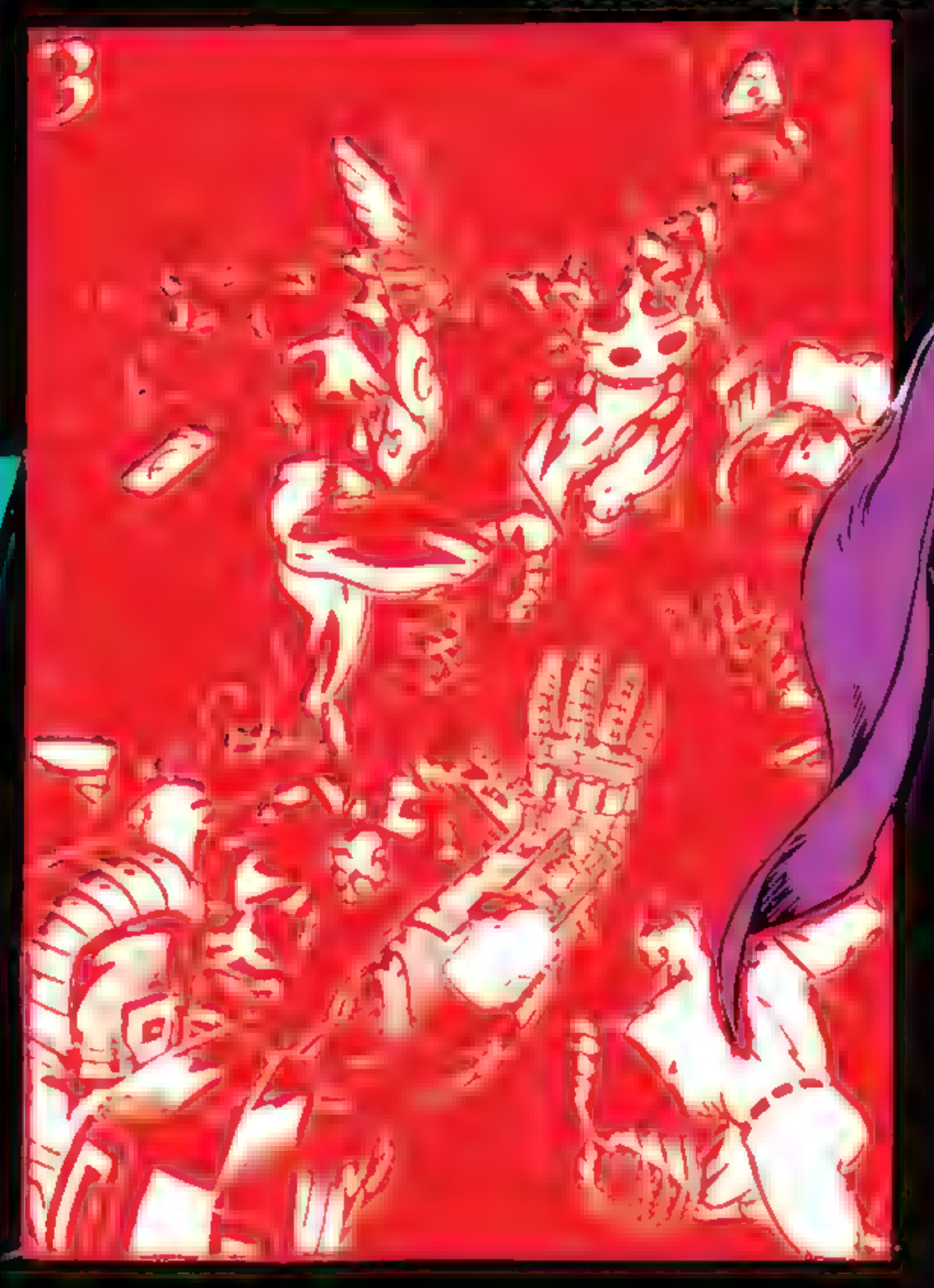

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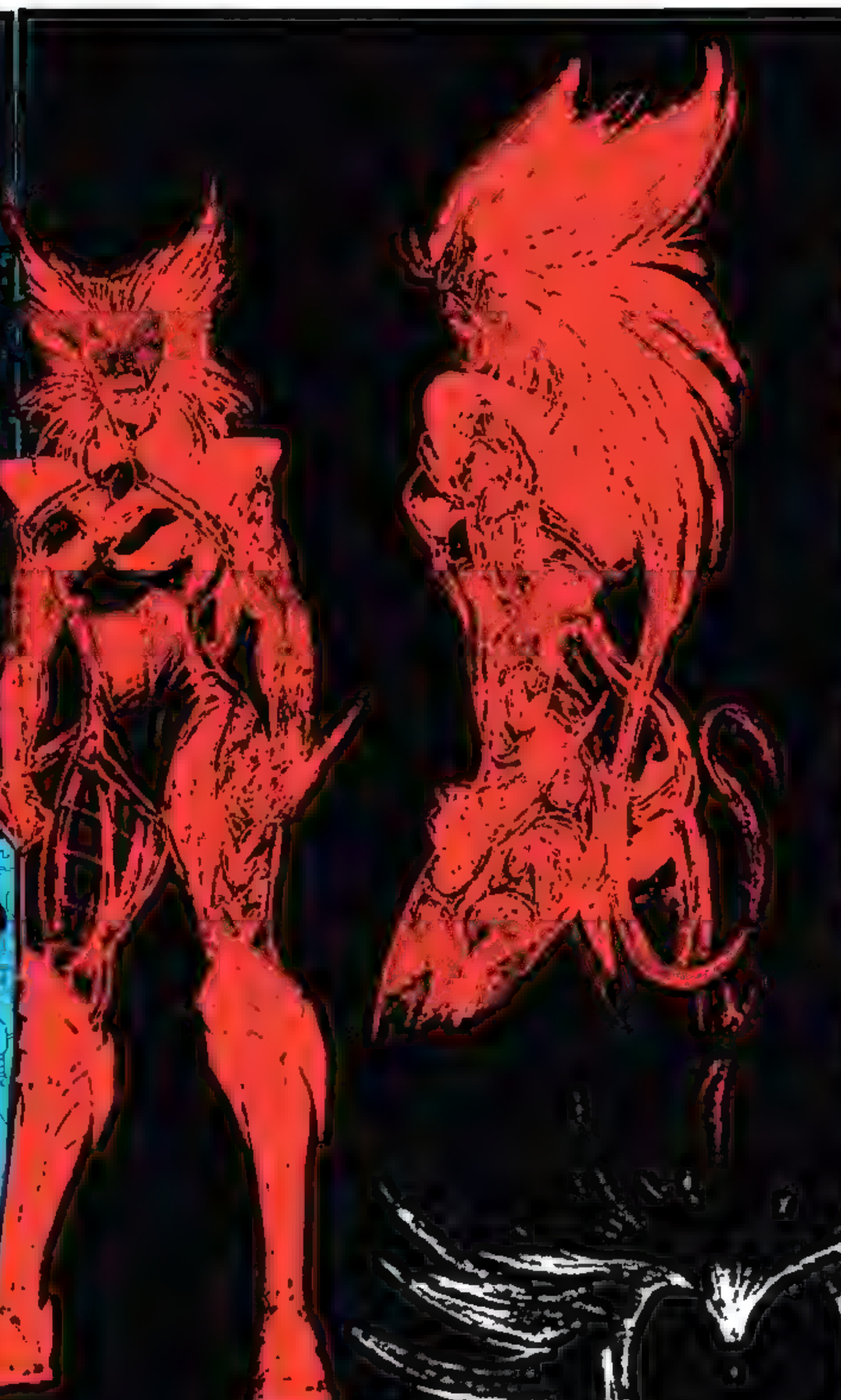

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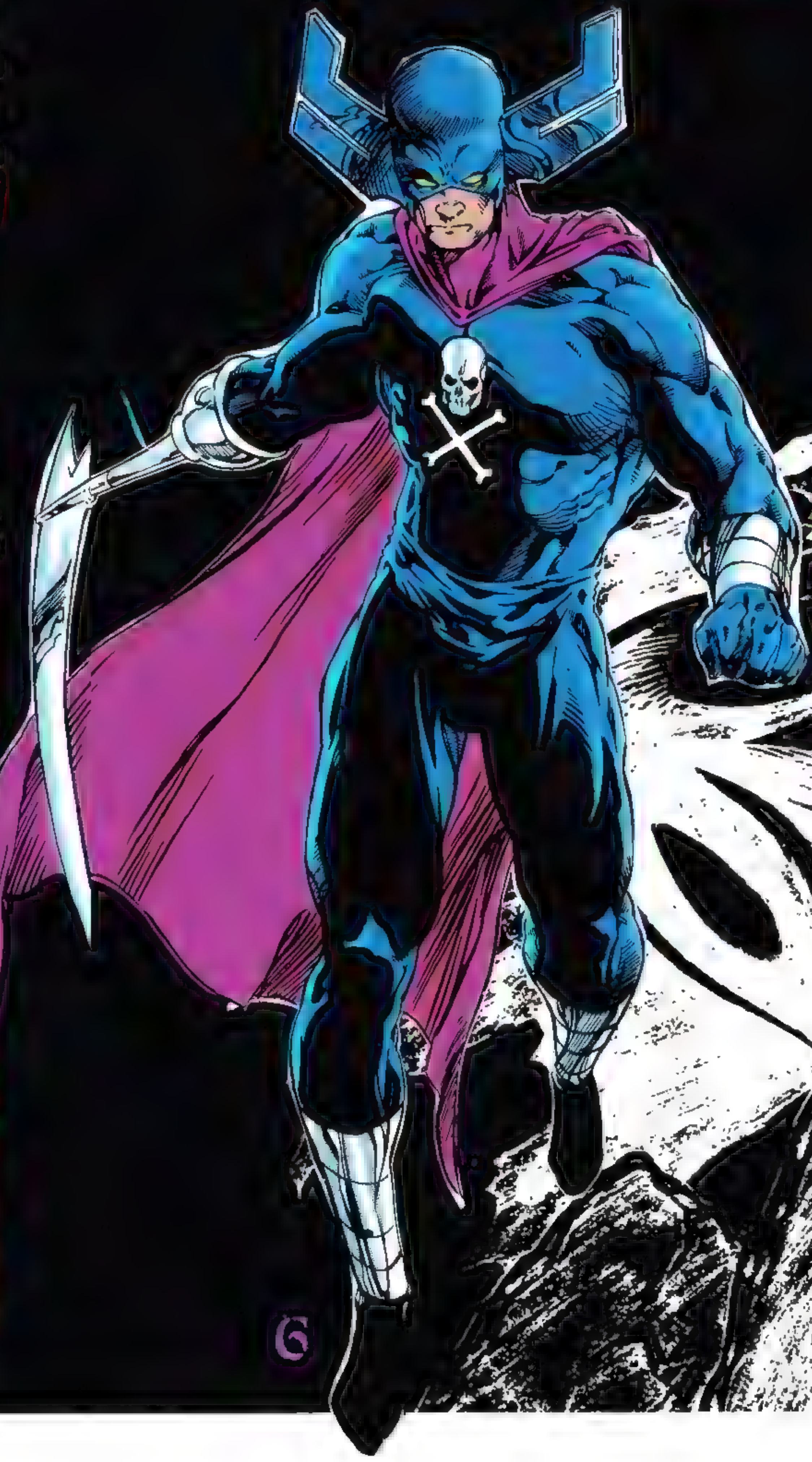

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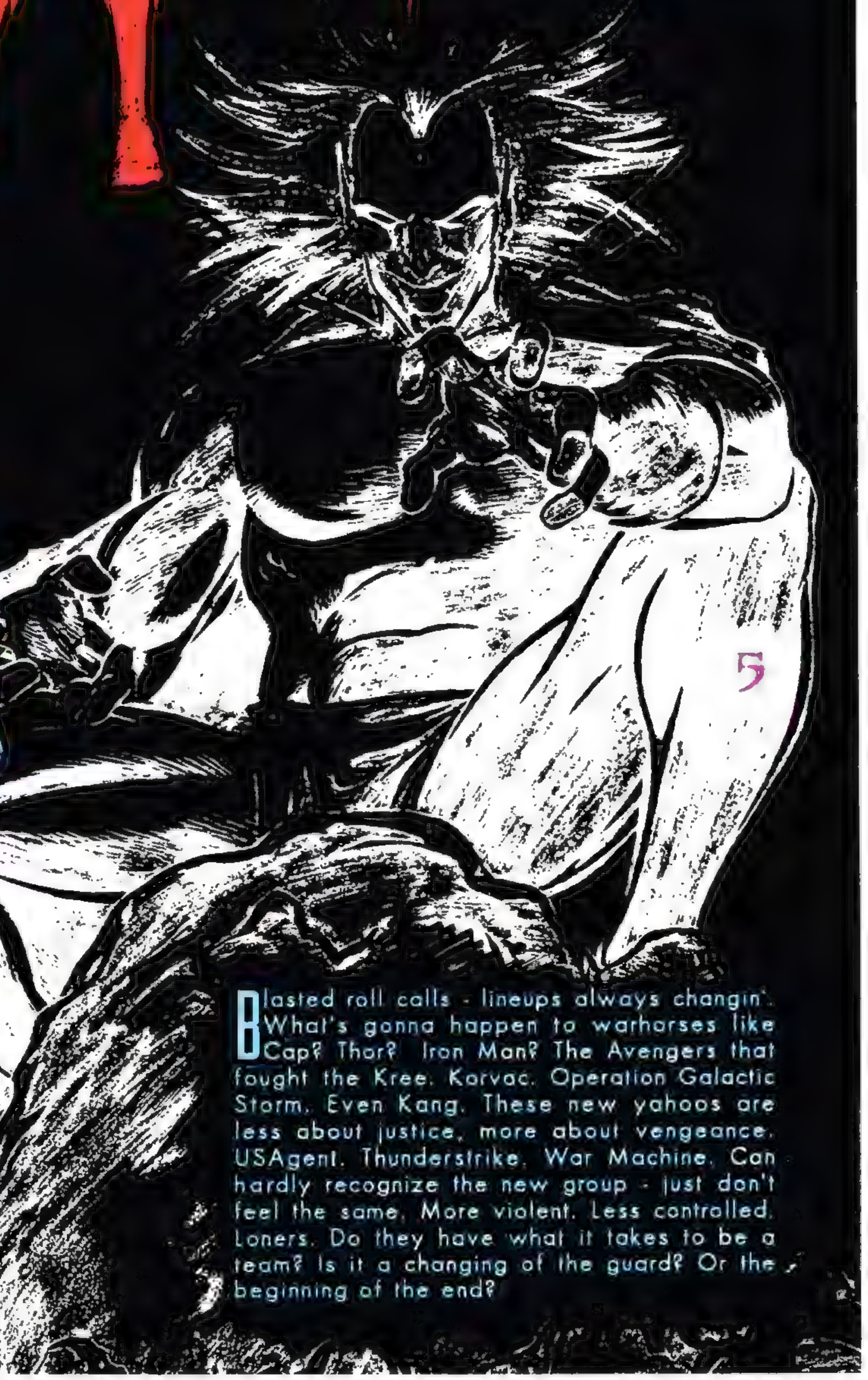


5

1 Pencil sketch for the new Hercules costume by Steve Epting.

2 Cover to the new THUNDERSTRIKE series by Ron Frenz written by Tom DeFalco.

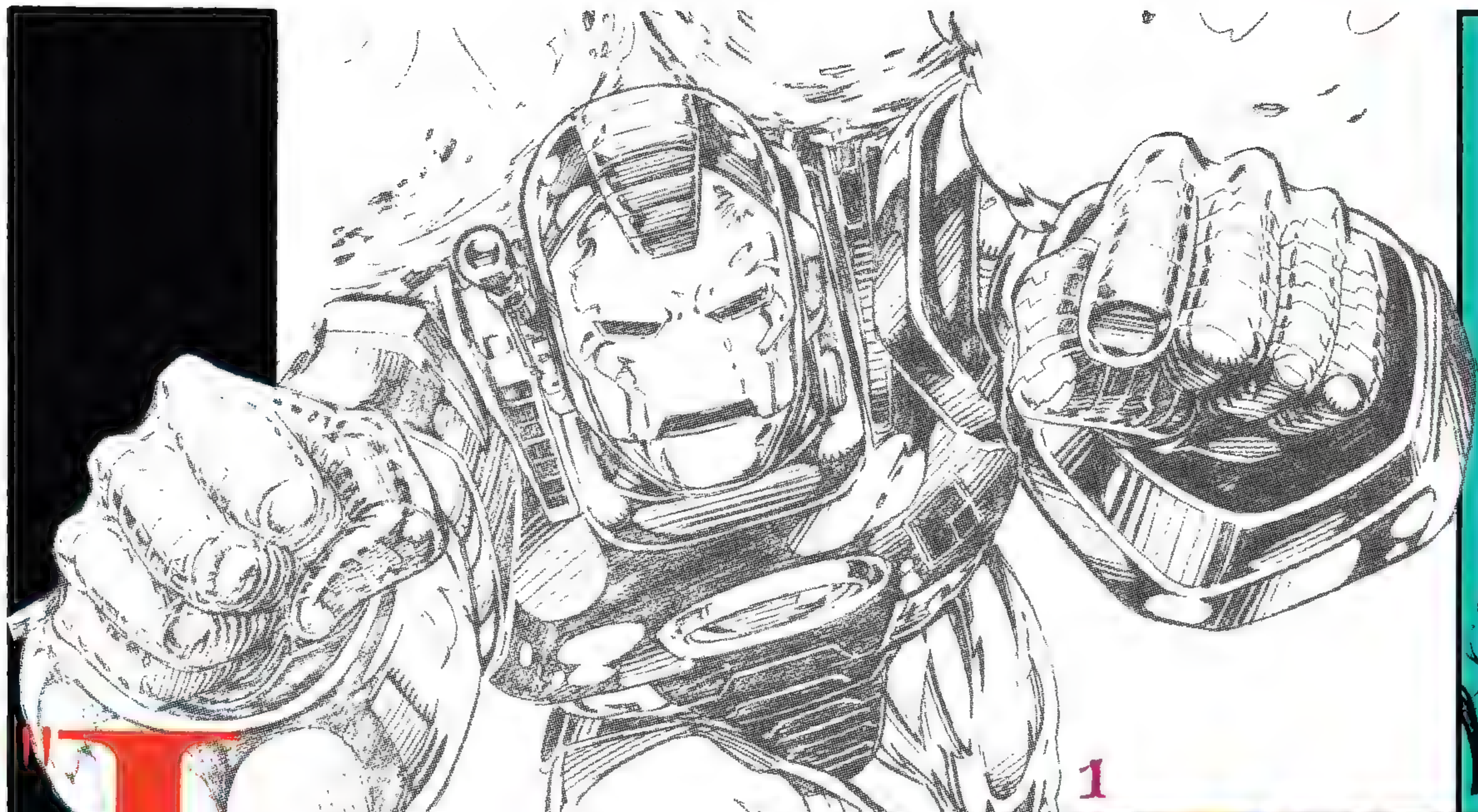
3 Cover #1 and #2 to AVENGERS: The Terminatrix Objective Limited Series by Mike Gustovich, written by Mark Gruenwald.

4 Character sketches for the newly created Shi'ar Emmisary by Steve Epting.

5 Penciled artwork for AVENGERS WEST COAST #100 by Larry Alexander, which will be written by Roy Thomas.

6 Artist Tom Raney's version of the Grim Reaper from the X-MEN/AVENGERS GREATEST BATTLES trade paperback.

Blasted roll calls - lineups always changin'. What's gonna happen to warhorses like Cap? Thor? Iron Man? The Avengers that fought the Kree. Korvac. Operation Galactic Storm. Even Kang. These new yahoos are less about justice, more about vengeance. USAgent. Thunderstrike. War Machine. Can hardly recognize the new group - just don't feel the same. More violent. Less controlled. Loners. Do they have what it takes to be a team? Is it a changing of the guard? Or the beginning of the end?

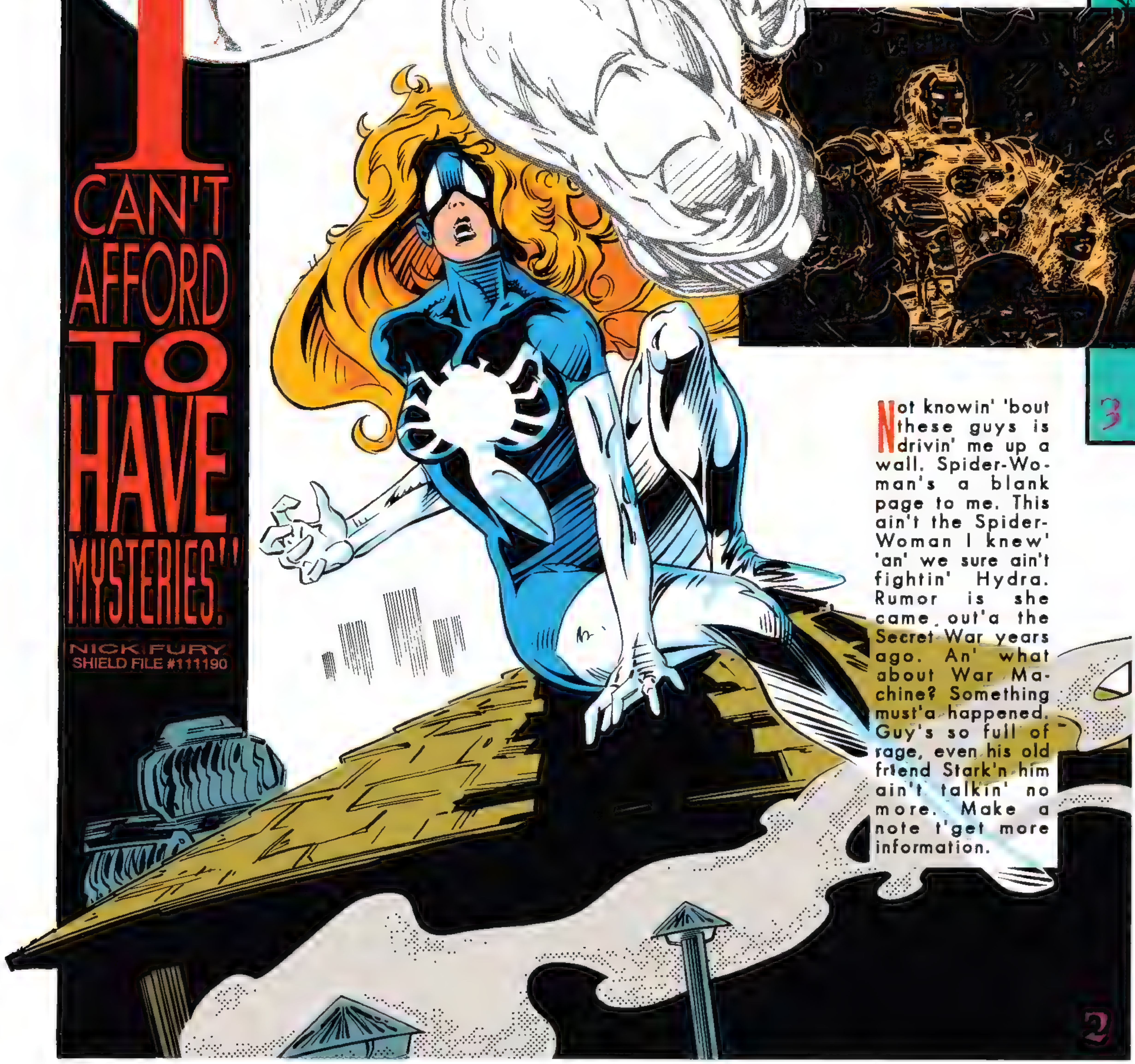


1

"I CAN'T AFFORD TO HAVE MYSTERIES!"

NICK FURY
SHIELD FILE #111190

Not knowin' 'bout these guys is drivin' me up a wall. Spider-Woman's a blank page to me. This ain't the Spider-Woman I knew' 'an' we sure ain't fightin' Hydra. Rumor is she came out'a the Secret War years ago. An' what about War Machine? Something must'a happened. Guy's so full of rage, even his old friend Stark'n him ain't talkin' no more. Make a note t'get more information.

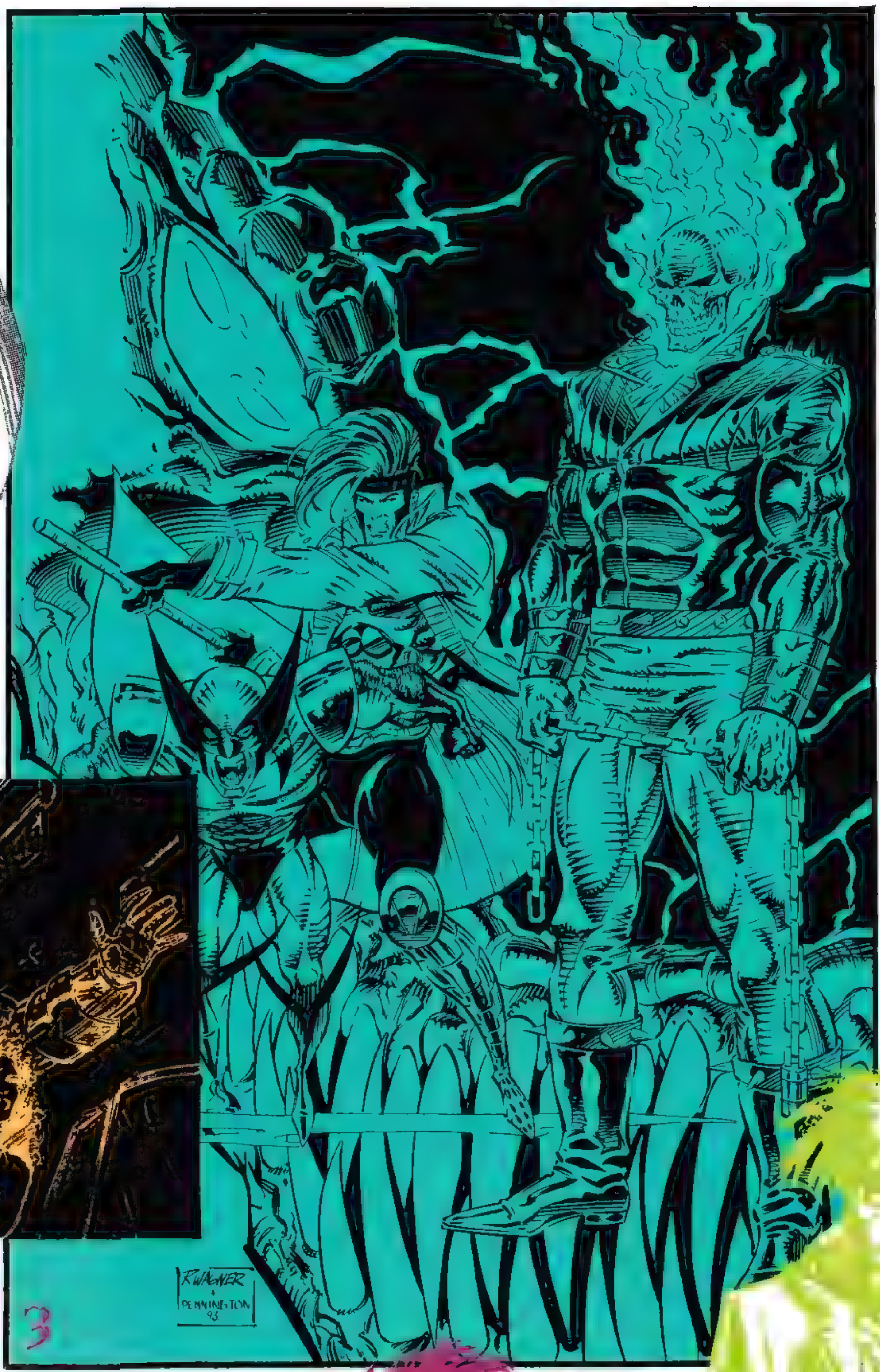


2

"TRYIN' TO CAGE A CAJUN."

NICK FURY
SHIELD FILE #102864

Most I can find, he's a thief from New Orleans. Been married. Suppos'dly, he's not on friendly terms with either the Silver Samurai or Sabretooth. 'Course, I don't think he's on friendly terms with anyone--grown up on the wrong side of the tracks, so ta speak. An' he was involved in some sort'a ruckus few months back with Ghost Rider. More'n that, I'm not certain. Word is, he's makin' his way back home to ol' Louis'ana. Can only figger it's got to do with settlin' some ol' debts with his thieves guild. Only thing is, thieves like takin'. Not givin'.



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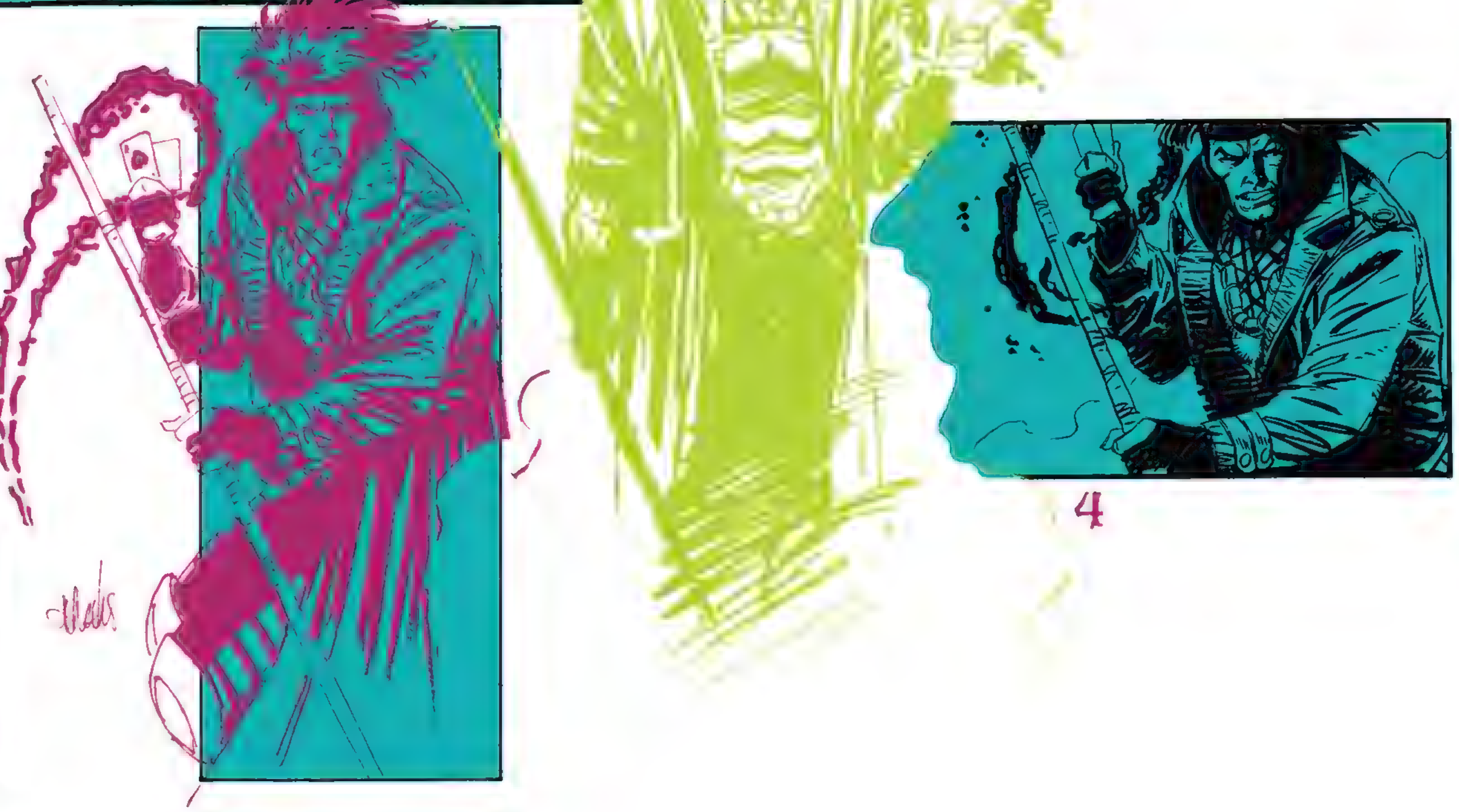


4

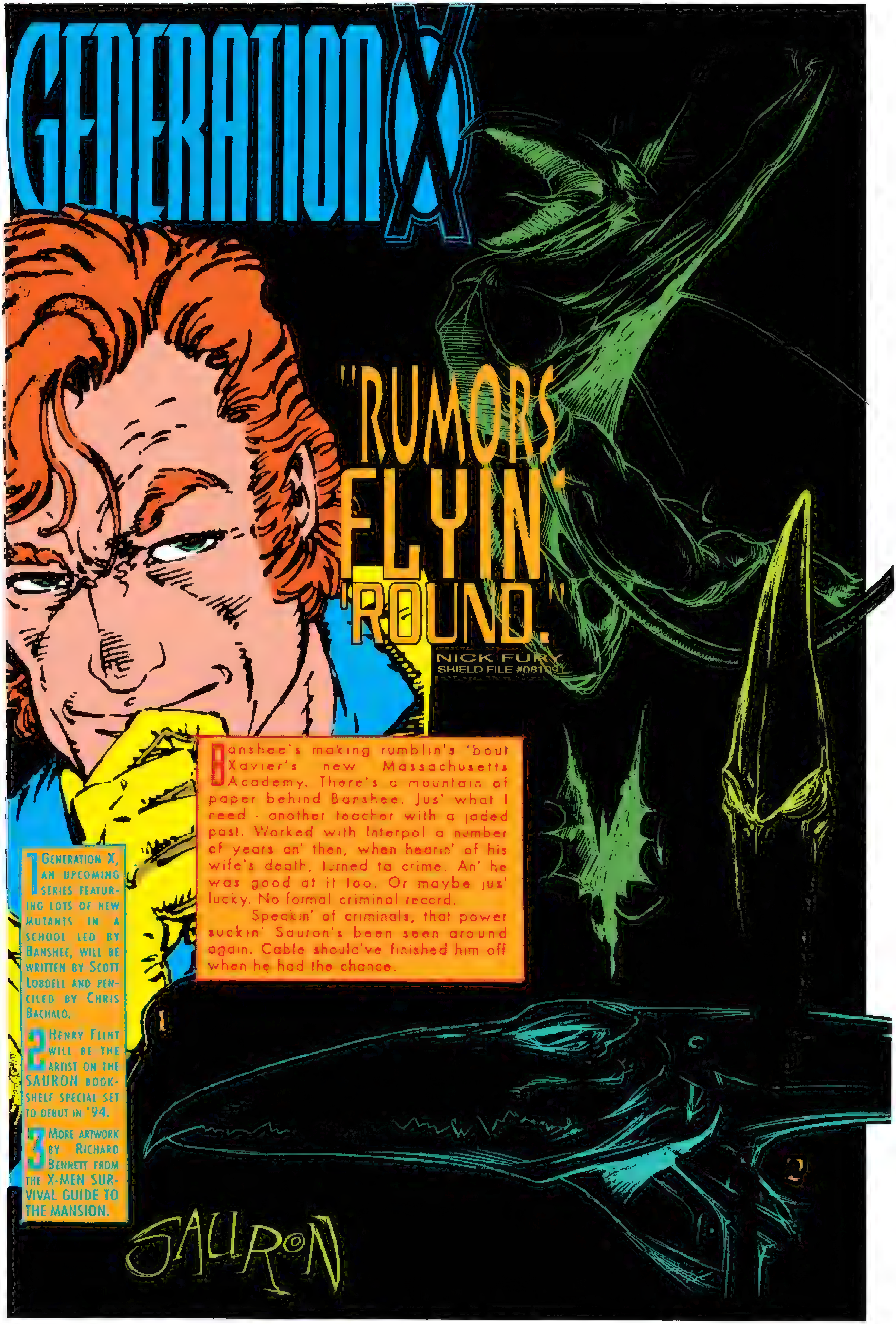
1 Penciled art for the new WAR MACHINE series by Barry Kitson which will be written by Len Kaminski and Scott Benson.

2 Pinup by artist John Czop for the SPIDER-WOMAN Limited Series, written by Roy Thomas.

3 Ron Wagner and Mark Pennington's cover to the X-MEN/GHOST RIDER bookshelf reprinting their first crossover adventure.

4 Lee Weeks' sketches for the GAMBIT Limited Series which will be written by Howard Mackie.

GENERATION X



"RUMORS FLYIN' 'ROUND."

NICK FURY
SHIELD FILE #081091

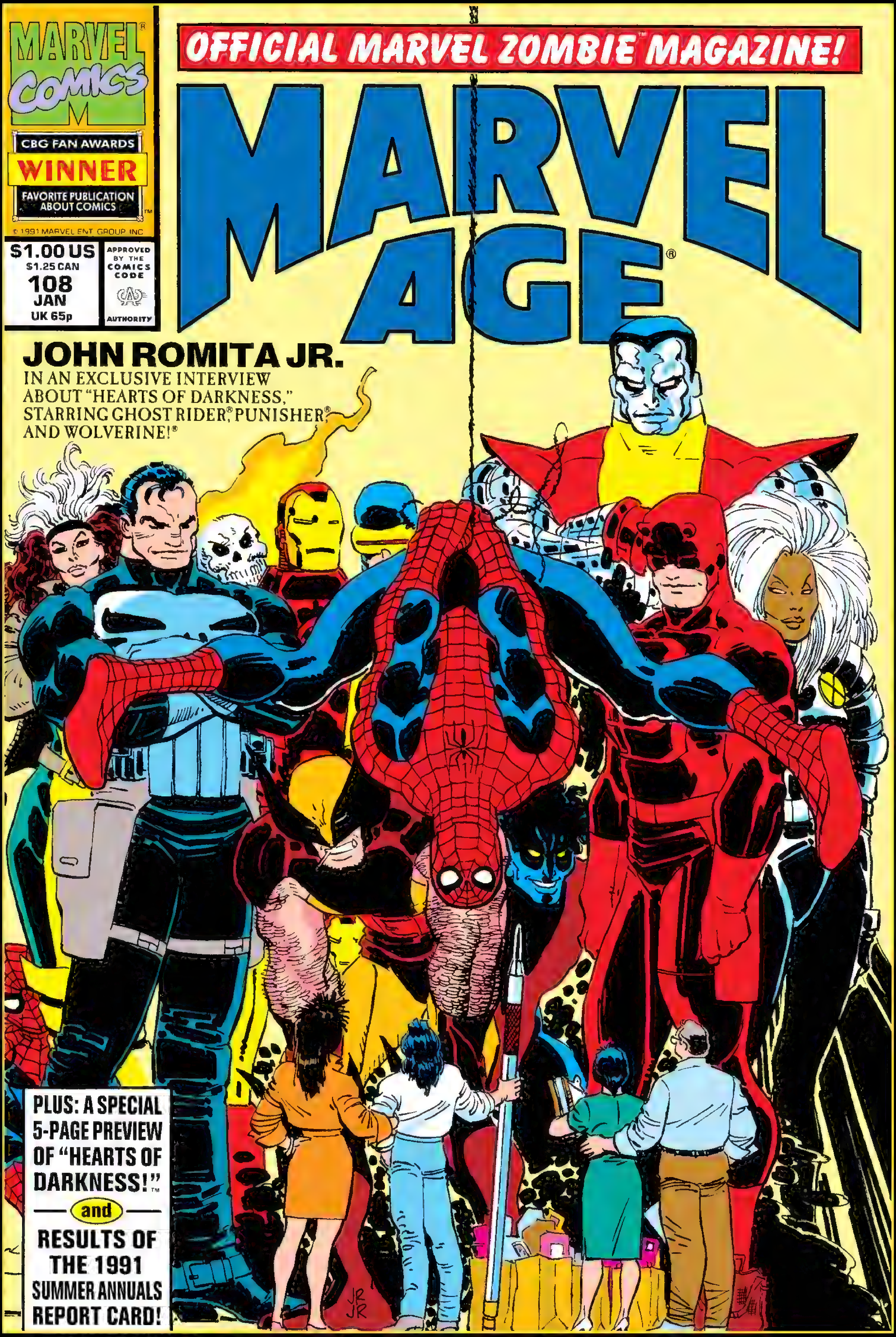
Banshee's making rumblin's 'bout Xavier's new Massachusetts Academy. There's a mountain of paper behind Banshee. Jus' what I need - another teacher with a jaded past. Worked with Interpol a number of years an' then, when hearin' of his wife's death, turned to crime. An' he was good at it too. Or maybe jus' lucky. No formal criminal record.

Speakin' of criminals, that power suckin' Sauron's been seen around again. Cable should've finished him off when he had the chance.

1 Generation X, an upcoming series featuring lots of new mutants in a school led by Banshee, will be written by Scott Lobdell and penciled by Chris Bachalo.

2 Henry Flint will be the artist on the SAURON bookshelf special set to debut in '94.

3 More artwork by Richard Bennett from the X-MEN SURVIVAL GUIDE TO THE MANSION.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108
JAN
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APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
OFFICIAL MARVEL ZOMBIE MAGAZINE!
MARVEL AGE
JOHN ROMITA JR.
IN AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW ABOUT "HEARTS OF DARKNESS," STARRING GHOST RIDER, PUNISHER, AND WOLVERINE!
PLUS: A SPECIAL 5-PAGE PREVIEW OF "HEARTS OF DARKNESS!"
and
RESULTS OF THE 1991 SUMMER ANNUALS REPORT CARD!
JR JR

MARVEL AGE #108 COVER BY JOHN ROMITA JR.

DARREN AUCK | STEVE MONTANO

MARVEL HOLIDAY SPECIAL #1 PINUP BY DARREN AUCK & STEVE MONTANO

TENSIONS HIGH
RURIK TYLER

MARVEL HOLIDAY SPECIAL #2 PINUP BY RURIK TYLER

MARVEL SUPER-HEROES #10 PINUP BY HOWARD CHAYKIN

MARVEL SUPER-HEROES #10 PINUP BY CHARLES VESS

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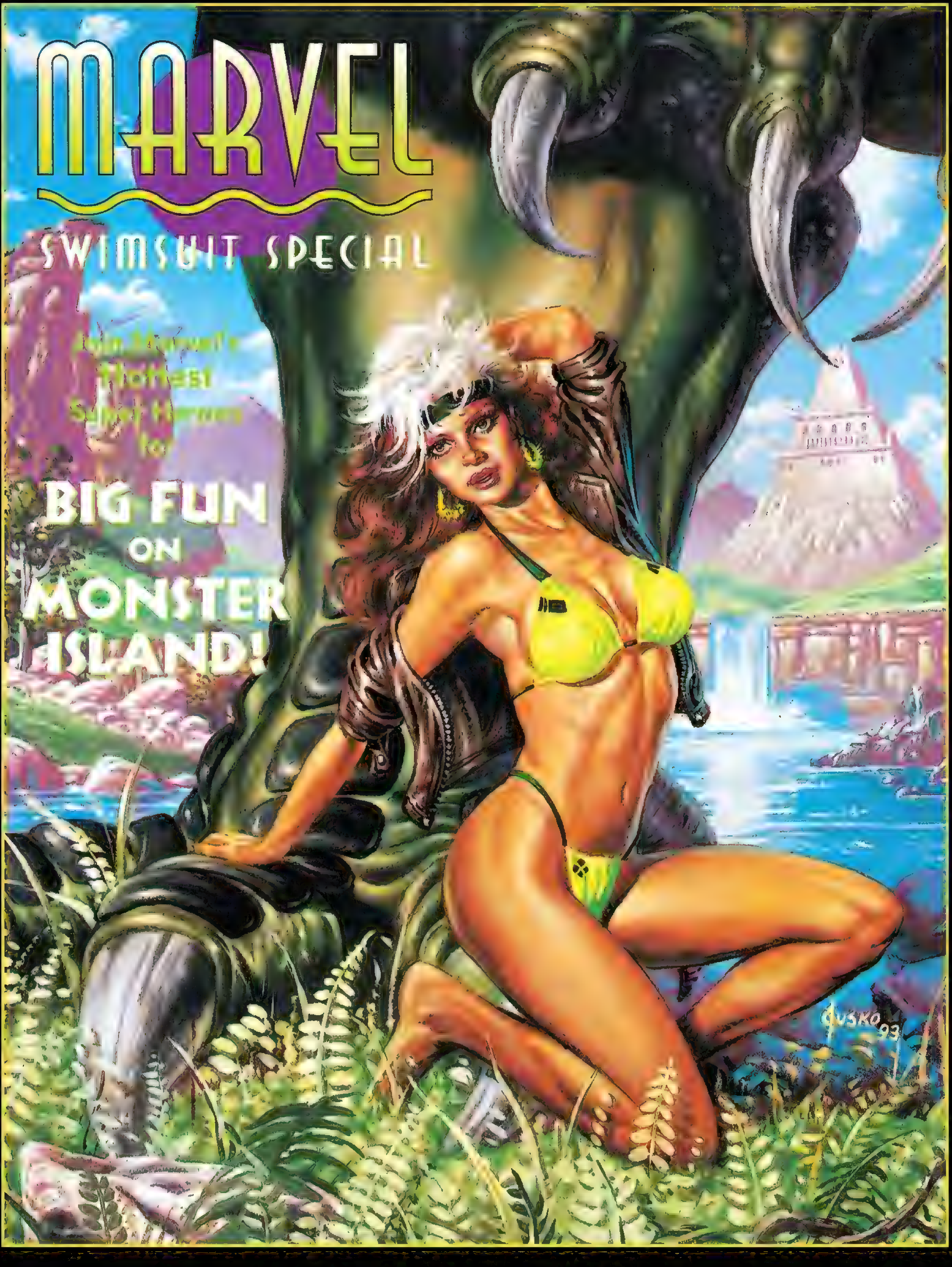
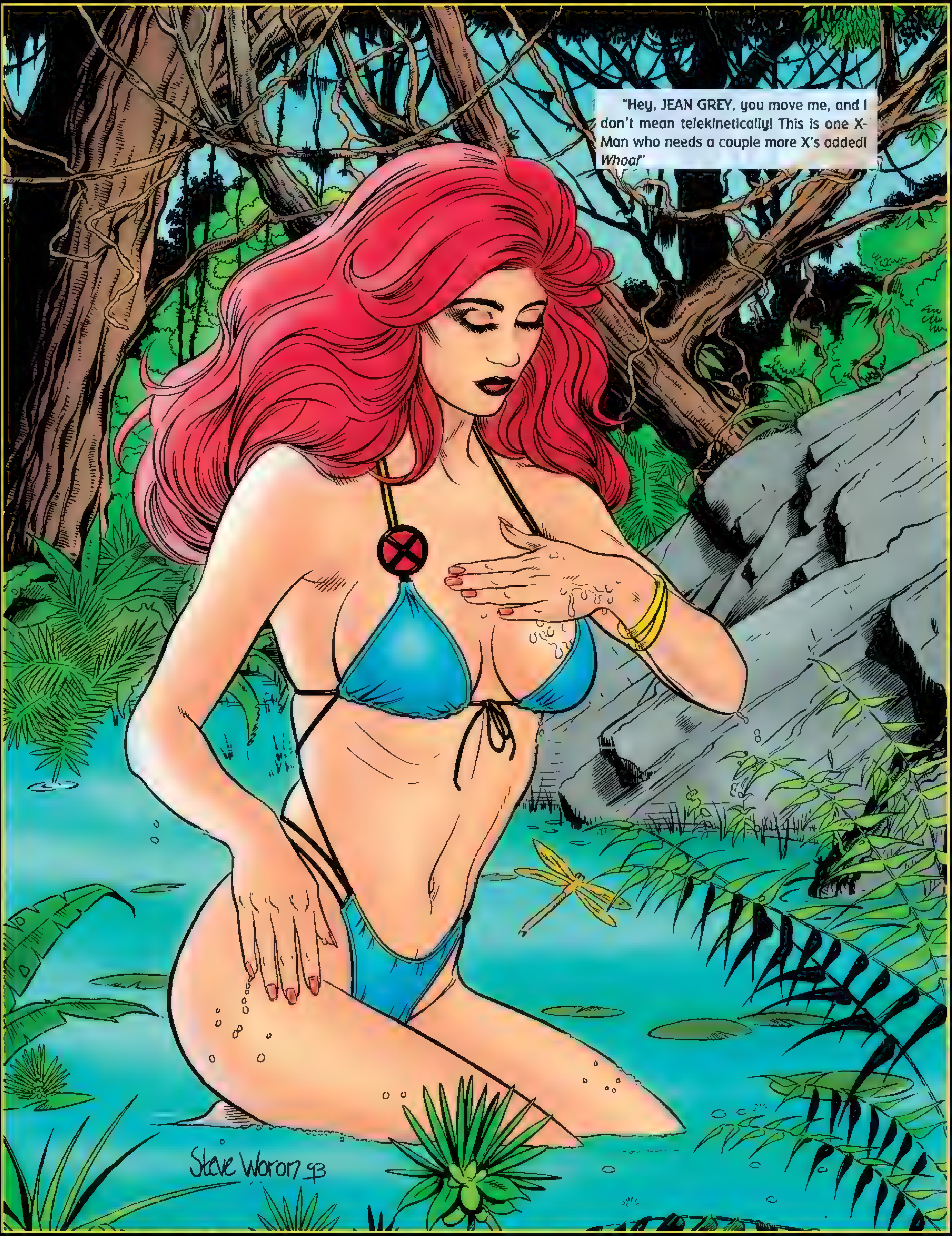
2 QTR 1992
NYSE TRADING SYMBOL MRV
MARVEL
QUARTERLY REPORT
MUTANT BOWL!
X-MAN VS. X-MAN IN A BATTLE OF WITS-- HOSTED BY PROFESSOR X!
CYCLOPS
ROGUE
BEAST
WOLVERINE
BLUE
BISHOP
JEAN GREY
STORM
COLOSSUS
GOLD
WHY DID MARVEL'S 2Q EARNINGS INCREASE 192%?
AND WHY DID FIRST HALF EARNINGS GROW 203%?
MORGAN AFTER COCKRUM

IN THE 1990s, MARVEL PUBLISHED THEIR QUARTERLY AND ANNUAL STOCKHOLDER REPORTS IN COMIC-BOOK FORMAT.
MARVEL QUARTERLY REPORT: 2ND QUARTER 1992 COVER BY TOM MORGAN


MARVEL
SWIMSUIT SPECIAL
Join Marvel's Hottest Super Heroes for
BIG FUN ON MONSTER ISLAND!
JUSKO 93

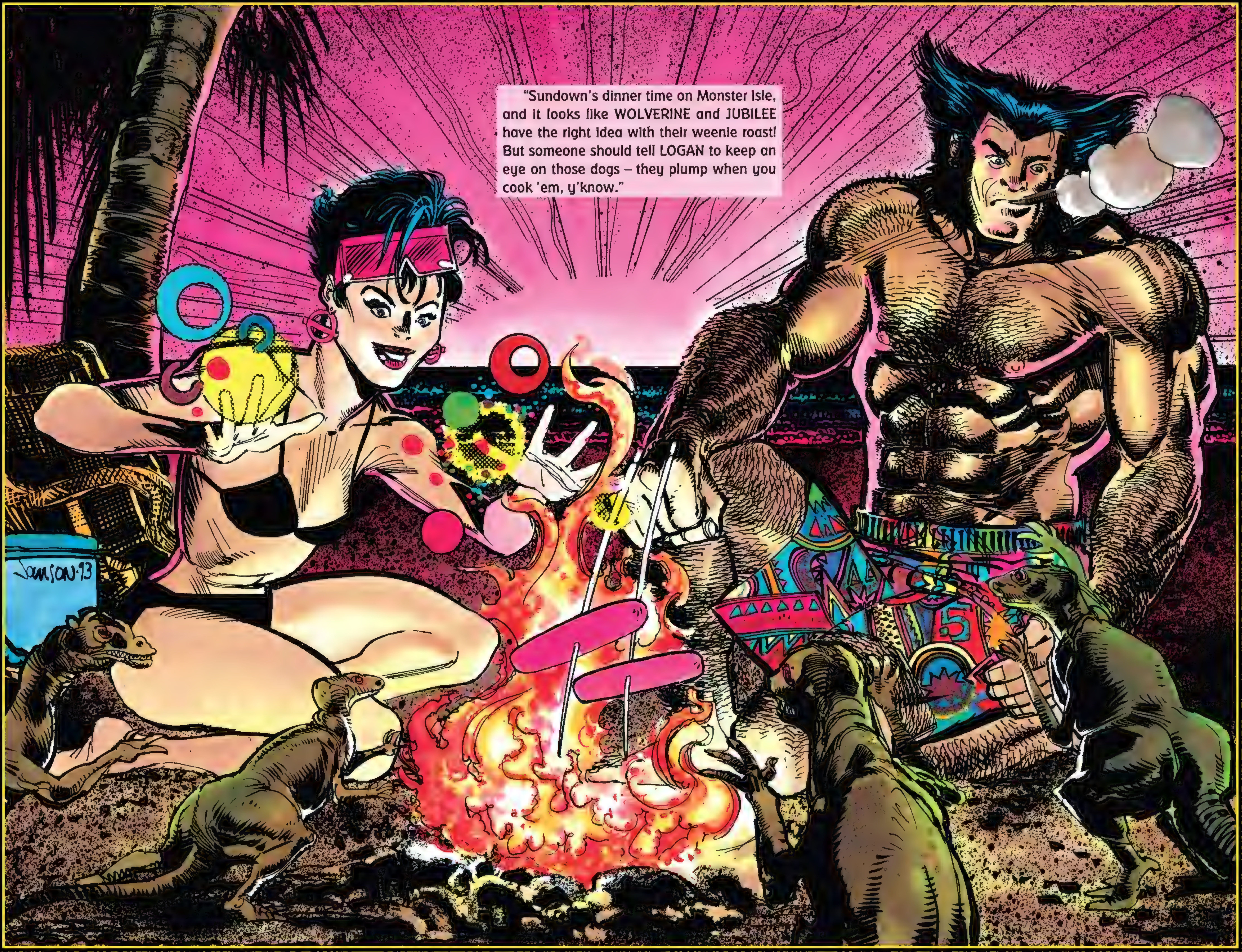
MARVEL SWIMSUIT SPECIAL #2 COVER BY JOE JUSKO


"Hey, JEAN GREY, you move me, and I don't mean telekinetically! This is one X-Man who needs a couple more X's added! *Whoa!*"
Steve Woron 93

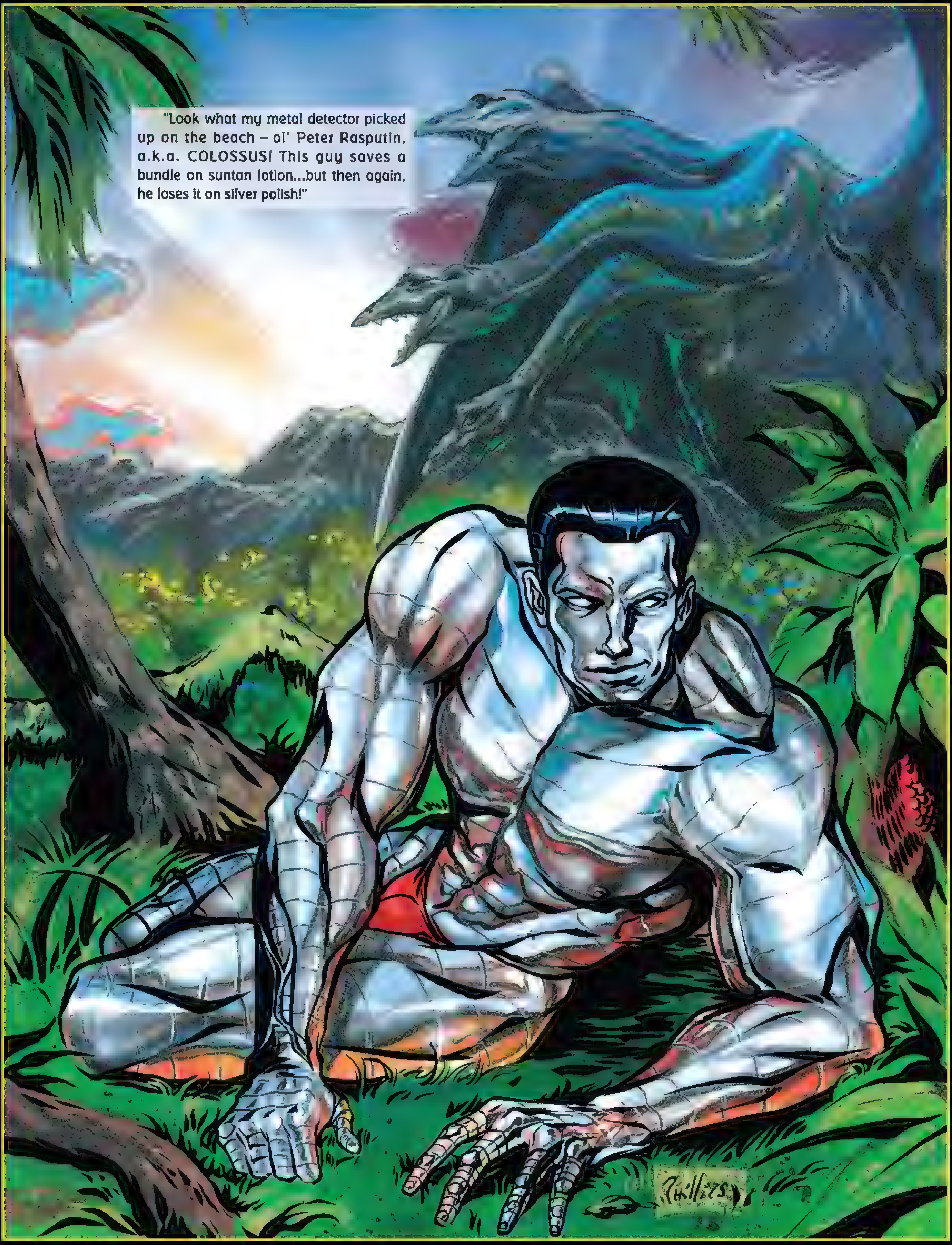
MARVEL SWIMSUIT SPECIAL #2 PINUP BY STEVE WORON & TOM SMITH • TEXT BY DAN SLOTT

"Lookin' like this, PSYLOCKE makes me wonder: who's got the Psy*key?*"

MARVEL SWIMSUIT SPECIAL #2 PINUP BY ART THIBERT & PAUL MOUNTS • TEXT BY DAN SLOTT


"Sundown's dinner time on Monster Isle, and it looks like WOLVERINE and JUBILEE have the right idea with their weenie roast! But someone should tell LOGAN to keep an eye on those dogs – they plump when you cook 'em, y'know."
Janson·93

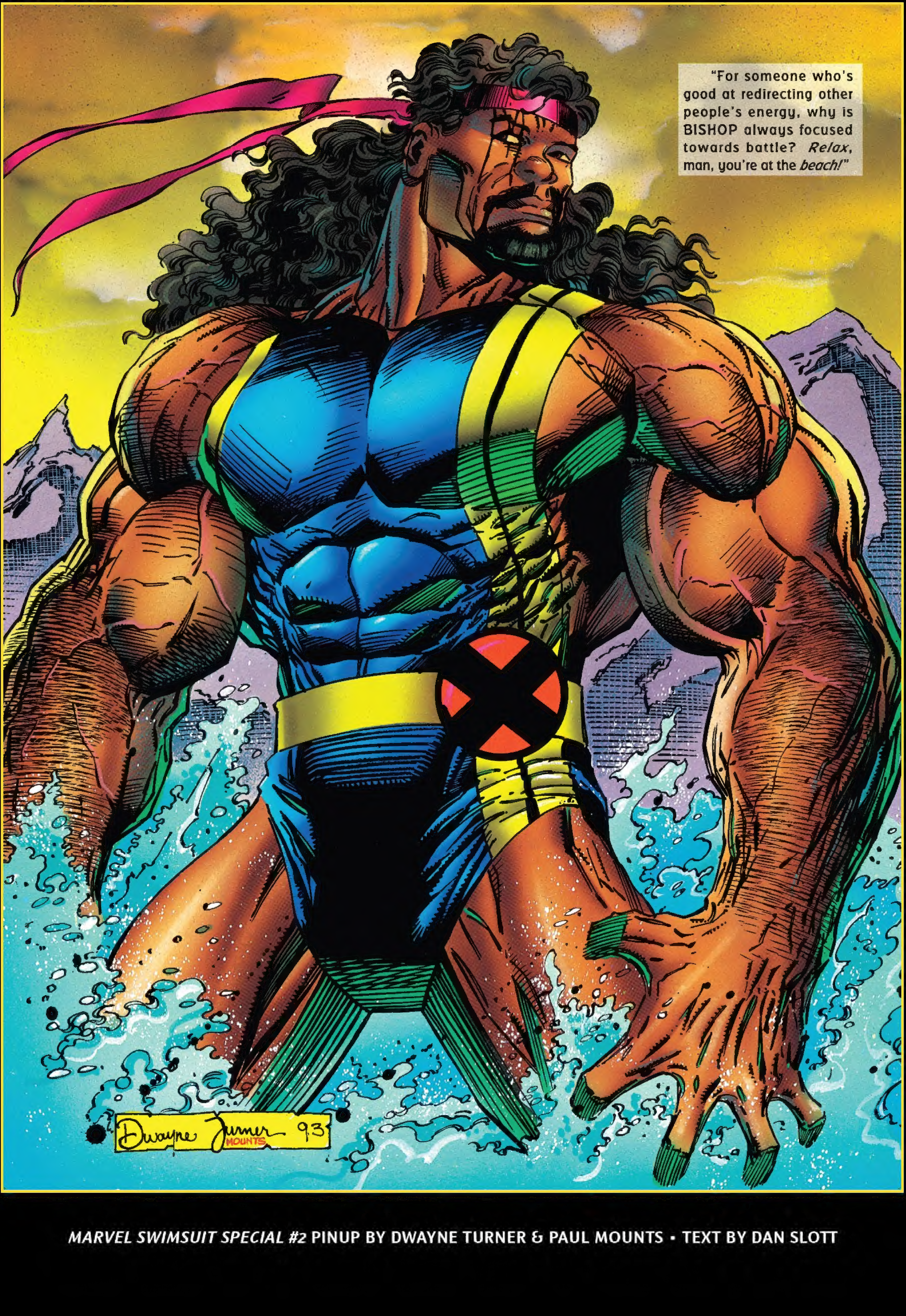
MARVEL SWIMSUIT SPECIAL #2 PINUP BY KLAUS JANSON • TEXT BY DAN SLOTT


"Look what my metal detector picked up on the beach – ol' Peter Rasputin, a.k.a. COLOSSUS! This guy saves a bundle on suntan lotion...but then again, he loses it on silver polish!"

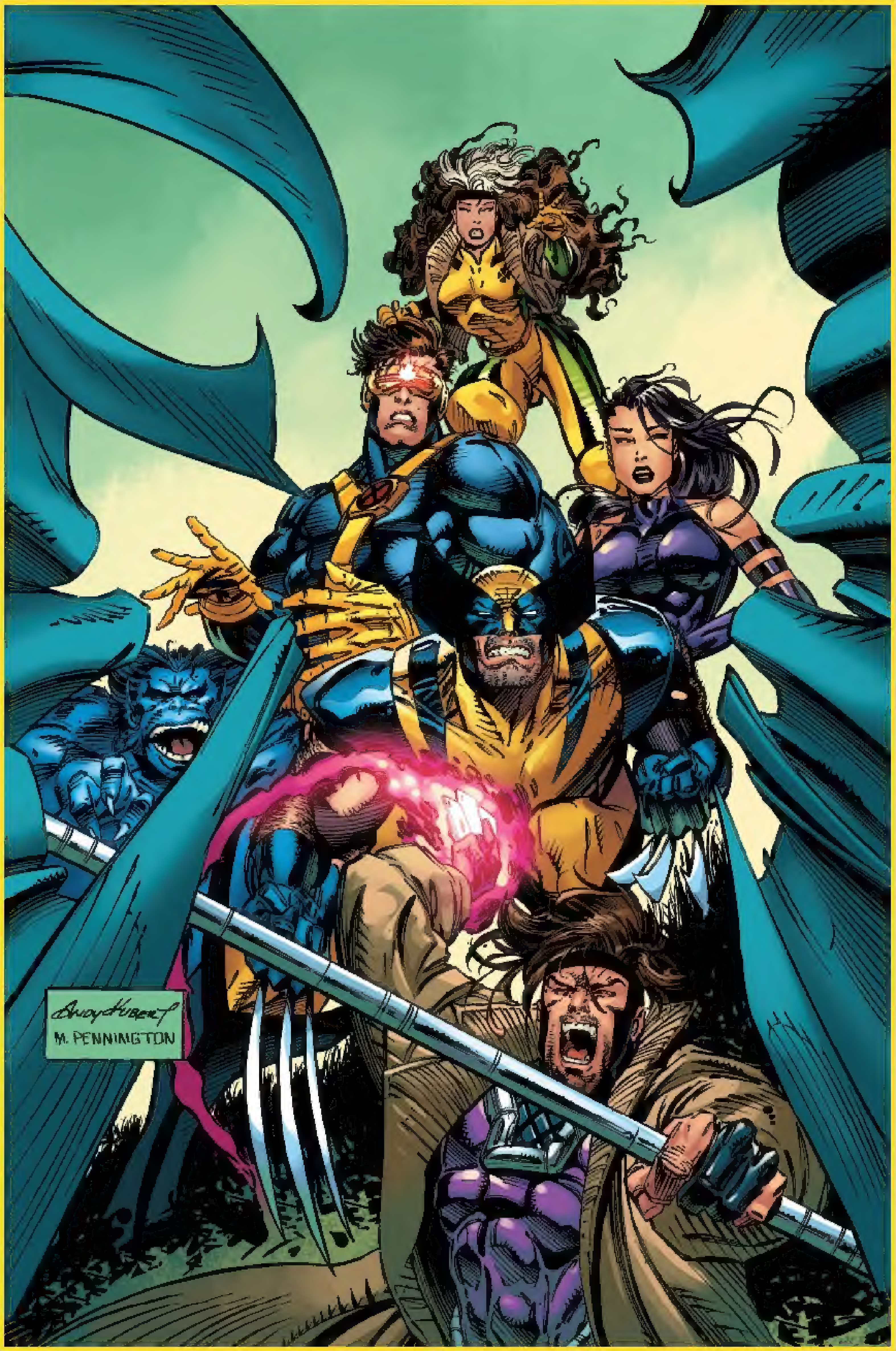
MARVEL SWIMSUIT SPECIAL #2 PINUP BY JOE PHILLIPS • TEXT BY DAN SLOTT

"Here's a STORM warnin' for ya! Heavy babe-age comin' in from the East! *Yowza!* Scattered showers of Pip-drool expected to follow!"
WILD MAN

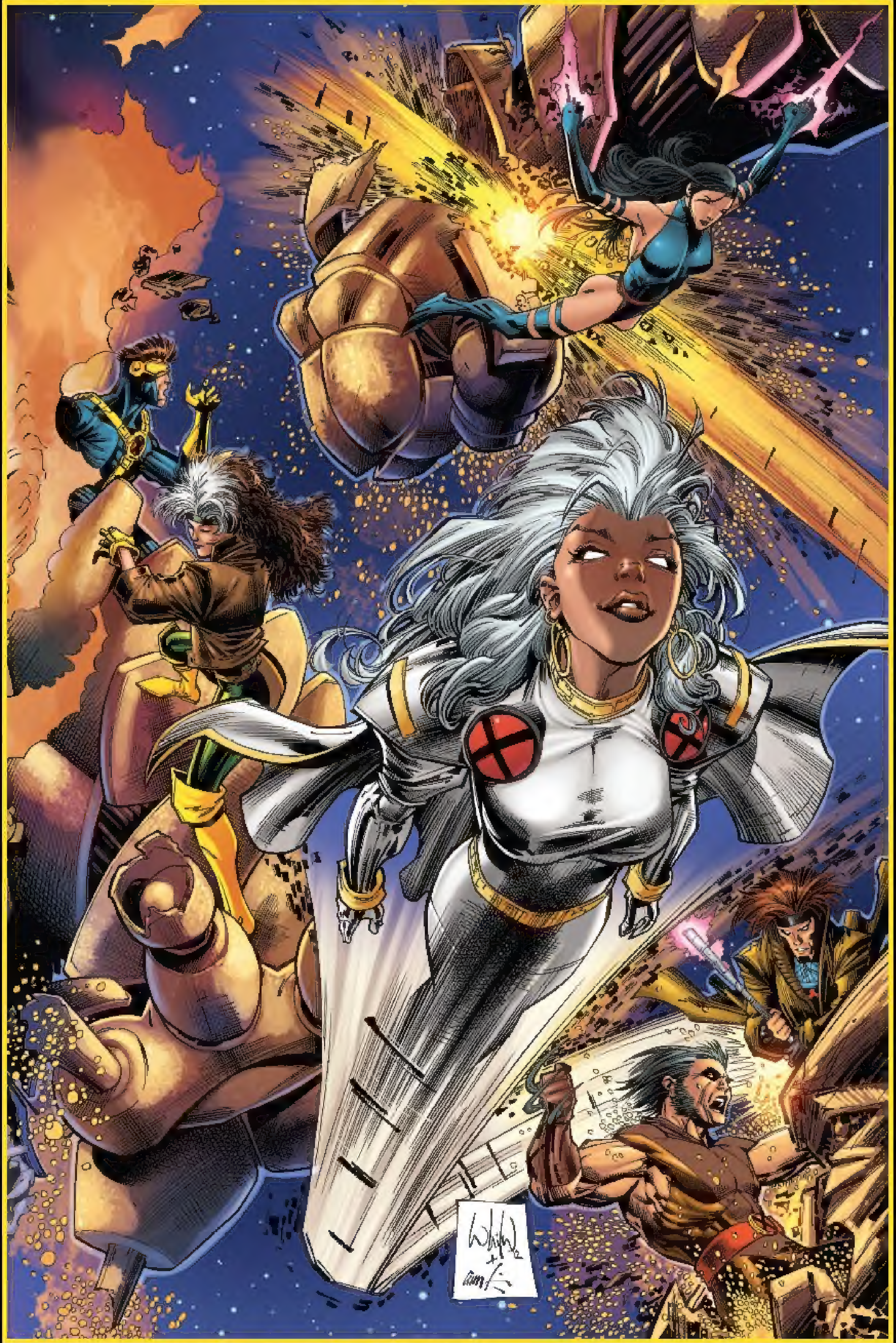
MARVEL SWIMSUIT SPECIAL #2 PINUP BY ANDREW WILDMAN & PAUL MOUNTS • TEXT BY DAN SLOTT


"For someone who's good at redirecting other people's energy, why is BISHOP always focused towards battle? *Relax*, man, you're at the *beach!*"
Dwayne Turner 93
MOUNTS

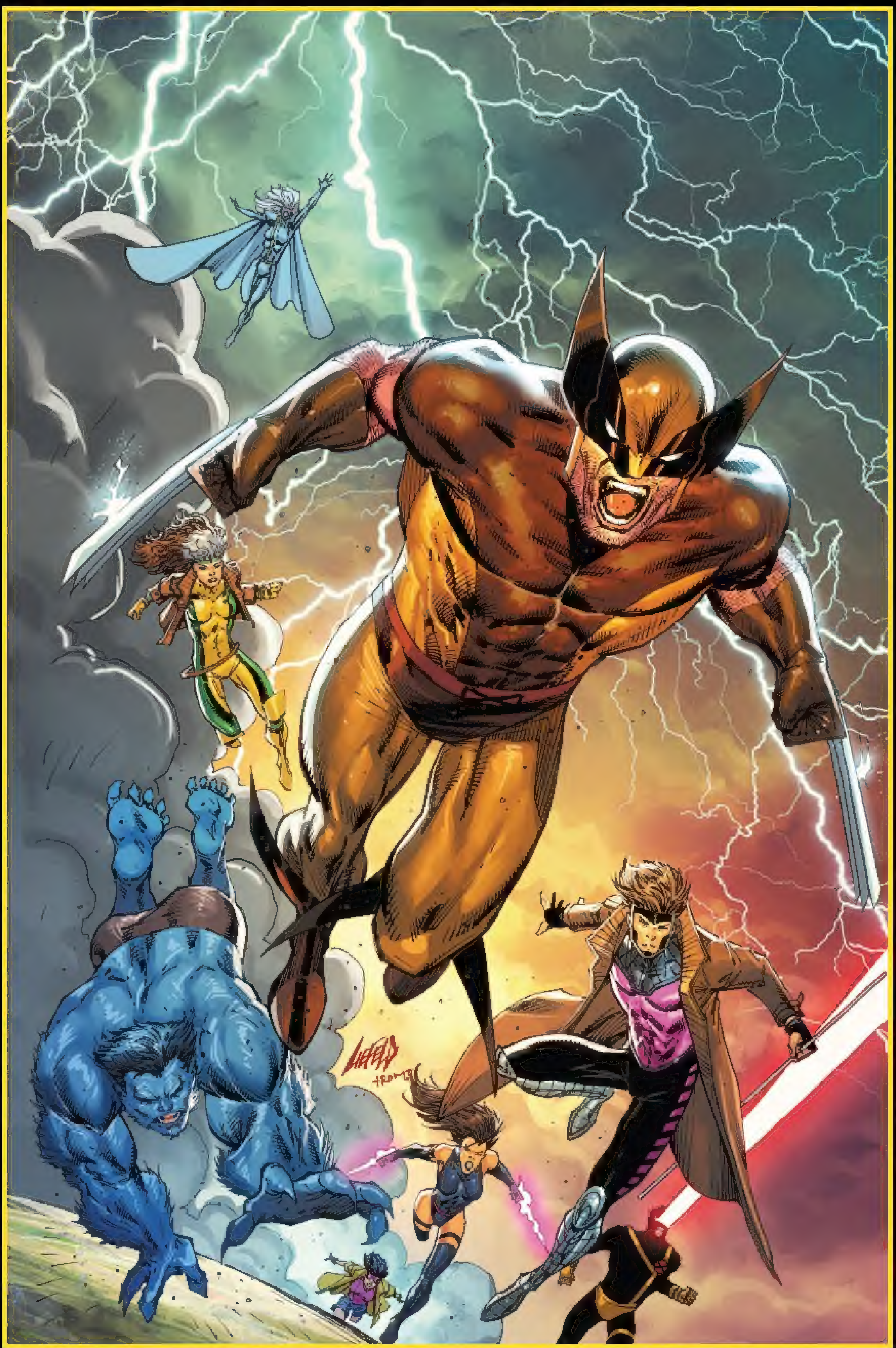
MARVEL SWIMSUIT SPECIAL #2 **PINUP BY DWAYNE TURNER & PAUL MOUNTS • TEXT BY DAN SLOTT**



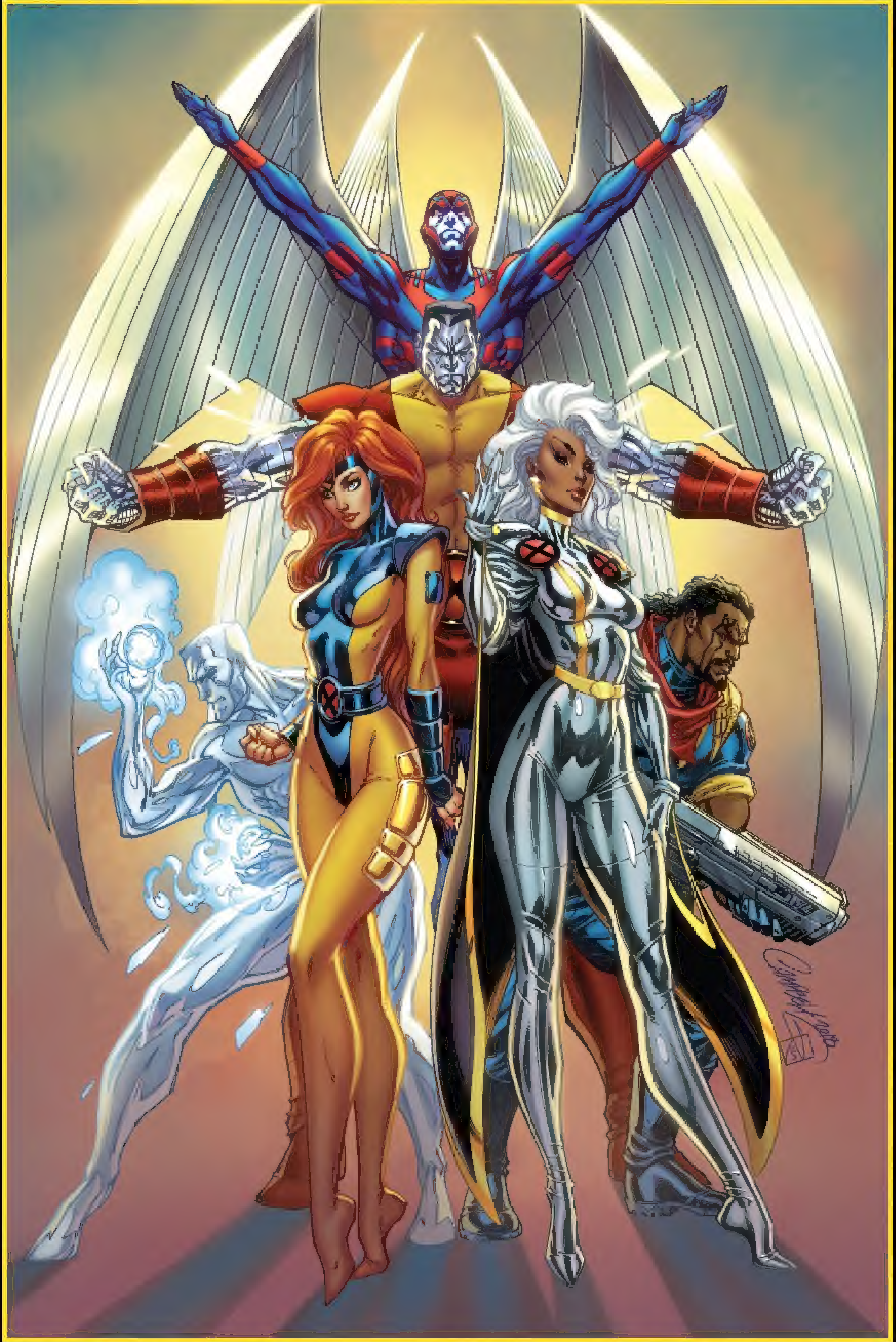
X-MEN: A SKINNING OF SOULS TPB COVER BY
ANDY KUBERT, MARK PENNINGTON & MATT MILLA



CABLE AND X-FORCE (2012) #8
X-MEN 50TH ANNIVERSARY VARIANT BY
WHILCE PORTACIO, CAM SMITH & ANDRES MOSSA

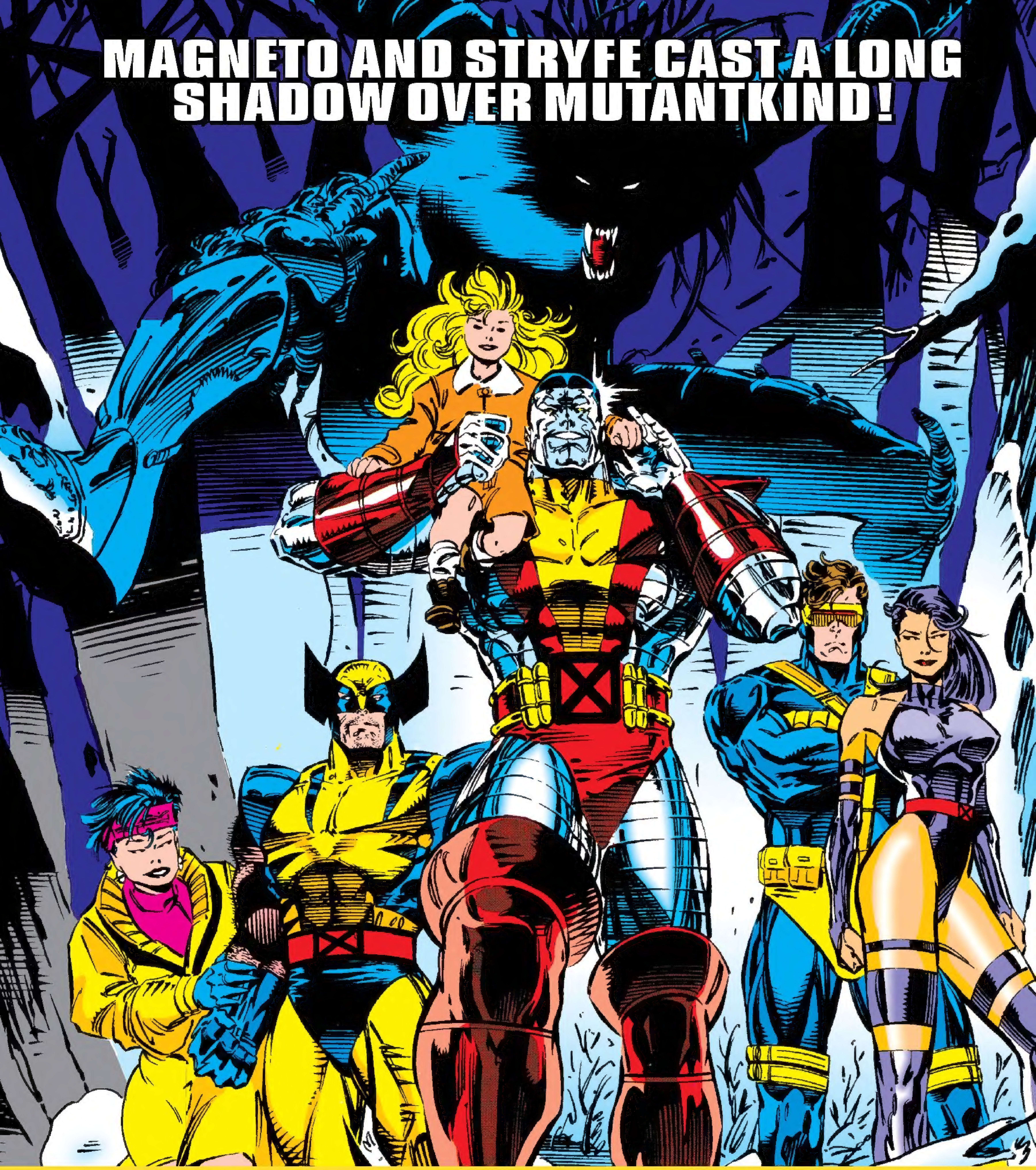


CHAMPIONS (2016) #26 UNCANNY X-MEN VARIANT BY
ROB LIEFELD & ROMULO FAJARDO JR.



VENOM (2018) #8 UNCANNY X-MEN VARIANT BY
J. SCOTT CAMPBELL & SABINE RICH

MAGNETO AND STRYFE CAST A LONG SHADOW OVER MUTANTKIND!



The X-Men travel to Russia when Colossus visits his sister, Illyana, formerly the New Mutants' Magik! But the sadistic Soul Skinner is loose, and the Russian government will do anything to stop him — even if that means shattering Colossus' family! Then, when Magneto's fanatical followers, the Acolytes, return, could it mean that the Master of Magnetism is still alive? Plus: Siena Blaze strikes as the Upstarts' deadly game continues! Betsy Braddock returns — but if Betsy's back, who is Psylocke?! And the X-Cutioner targets the dying Mastermind as mutants worldwide begin falling mysteriously ill! What horror has Stryfe unleashed on mutantkind — and can the X-Men cope with his lethal legacy?

UNCANNY X-MEN #297-300 & ANNUAL #17, X-MEN #17-23, STRYFE'S STRIKE FILE
AND X-MEN UNLIMITED #1

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